University of Alberta

NARRATIVE EXPLORATIONS—PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING

By

Michele Dick ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Department of Secondary Education

Library and
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

0-494-09368-4

Your file Votre référence
ISBN:
Our file Notre référence
ISBN:

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Abstract

Narrative Explorations—Principals' Experiences of Mentoring

Today's school administrators work in an environment fraught with increasing demands and changing philosophies. In an attempt to respond to expressed concerns, school jurisdictions and the Alberta Teachers' Association have begun to explore the efficacy of formalized mentoring programs. This narrative inquiry focuses on the lived experiences of four principals and the researcher as they share their experiences of life on the school landscape and the role mentoring relationships have played throughout their careers. Reflecting on their layered experiences as teachers, assistant principals and principals, the participants explore stories related to career advancement, psychosocial and ongoing professional development. Mentoring functions including sponsorship; exposure and visibility; coaching; role modelling; acceptance and confirmation; counselling; and friendship are identified. As well, participants highlight personal qualities and relational characteristics as critically important to the development of mentoring partnerships.

Emerging threads and resonating stories draw the reader's attention to the importance these individuals place on trusting and caring relationships; the role mentoring plays in identity formation; the desire to develop a more multi-faceted, dynamic and inclusive understanding of mentoring relationships and their commitment to reciprocal and responsive lifelong learning and lifelong mentoring experiences.

Acknowledgements

I write this Acknowledgement at a time when the courses are done; the defense over; and the dissertation complete and ready for printing. There is no question that I am filled with a sense of accomplishment and pride yet I am also aware of more than a little sadness. The journey has been worth each and every moment and I have learned much more than I could ever have imagined—about education; about being a teacher, a leader, and a learner; and about myself as a person in relationship with others. I would never have achieved any of this without the help and encouragement of a number of people.

I am indebted to the professors who have supported me and inspired me for they have encouraged me to step off the roadside curb and to enter fully into the parade as a learner and researcher.

To my supervisor, *Nancy Melnychuk,* for her guidance, her positive energy and for helping me to stay the course,

…to *Maryanne Doherty*, *George Richardson* and *Bill Maynes* for their optimism, genuine concern and thoughtful suggestions,

…to *Jean Clandinin* for her inspiration and insightful understanding of all things, and for encouraging the rewriting and retelling that has led to endless possibilities, and

…to *Carol Mullen* for her many contributions to my work:

I thank you all.

I am also indebted to *Sean*; *Steve*; *Maureen* and *Tom* for the time they so willingly shared with me. Without their support and involvement this study would not have been possible. I have come to know each of these principals as educators who care, who have beliefs, values and outlooks that are very much about the work of teaching and learning and who have sought mentorship and relationship in many differing ways, determined to support and strengthen their leadership practice. I am a better person for having shared this experience with them.

Finally, I turn my attention to the four people who mean the most to me: *Larry*, *Ashley*, *James* and *Brayden*. To live within a family that so unselfishly supports my aspirations, hopes and dreams is humbling. It is they who provide the solid ground that supports me in trying to reach beyond my grasp. In so many ways their caring concern and active engagement with me, my passions and my work helps me to grow evermore into the kind of person I want to be and that care and engagement finds its genesis in the special kind of union I have with them.

Larry; Ashley, James, Brayden: "The only service a friend can really render is to keep up your courage by holding up a mirror in which you can see a noble image of yourself" (George Bernard Shaw). Thank you for the noble image and thank you for being my true friends.

AS ALWAYS, FOR JEAN AND PETER

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: Beginning the Journey 1

The Current Context of Mentoring: An Authoritative Voice 1

A Personal Context for Mentoring: My Own Voice 3

Purpose of the Study 7

Research Question 9

Significance of the Study 9

CHAPTER 2: Turning to the Literature 12

A Conceptual Framework for Mentoring: The Authoritative Voice 12

Mentorship

    Coming to an Initial Understanding of the Term 17

    The Mentor 18

Informal versus Formal Relationships 19

Benefits of Mentoring 21

Alternative Approaches to Traditional Mentoring 24

CHAPTER 3: Understanding Through Narrative Inquiry 28

An Inside-Out Examination 28

Research Approach: Turning to Narrative Inquiry 29

The Study

Locating Myself Within Narrative 34

My Role as Researcher 37

Shaping the Process 38

Sharing Stories: Beginning an Ongoing Conversation 40

Enriching the Field Text 44

Field Text to Research Text 45

Intertwining Voices Construct the Research Text 46

Establishing Trustworthiness 47

Credibility 48

Transferability 49

Dependability and Confirmability 50

Authenticity 51

Terms 54

Traditional Mentoring 54

Formal Mentorship 54

Informal Mentoring 54

Mentorship 54

Technical Mentoring 55

Alternative Mentoring 55

CoMentorship 55

Lifelong Mentoring 55

Ethical Considerations 55

CHAPTER 4: Michele's Story 57

A Reflection 57

Being With Myself: Where Does This Story Begin? 58

A Starting Place 59

A Defining Experience: Negative Mentorship 60

Experiencing Positive Mentorship 63

The Path to Leadership 65

My Network Grows 67

My Past Continues to Inform My Present 70

"Always More, Michele" 74

CHAPTER 5: Sean's Story 80

We Begin 80

A Shared Conversation 85

Coming to Administration: Career Mentoring 89

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship 91

Reflecting on the Principalship 97

A Mosaic of Support 101

Border Crossings: Connecting With Senior Administrators 105

Telling; Retelling and Reimagining 108

Mentorship Reimagined 110

CHAPTER 6: Tom's Story 114

We Begin 114

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship

Finding a Mentor 117

"Learning the Ropes" 119

Making A Connection 122

My Mentor; My Teacher; My Friend: Solidifying a Relationship 123

Coming Full Circle: Being a Mentor 127

Coaching and Mentoring 129

Mentorship Reimagined 133

CHAPTER 7: Steve's Story 136

We Begin 136

Reflecting on the Principalship 139

Living Underground 142

Relationships: Dancing Around the Edges of Mentoring 145

Mentorship: Resisting Definition 150

Coming to the Term

- Mentorship - Chemistry and Relationship 153
- Authentic Mentoring—"The Oughts and the Ought Nots" 159

Mentorship Reimagined—Do Mentors Have an Expiry Date? 162

CHAPTER 8: Maureen's Story 165

We Begin 165

Beginning a Shared Conversation 168

A Journey to the Principalship

- Paying Attention 171
- Professional Development Opportunities 175

A Mosaic of Support 177

Adding a Coach 180

Mentorship Reimagined 185

CHAPTER 9: Deepening Our Understanding of the Mentoring Experience 189

Narrative Threads 190

Laying Down the First Thread: Finding Definition 191

Career Functions: Advancement 192

Psychosocial Functions: Learning the ropes: competence; identity; effectiveness 193

Personal and Professional Connections, Growth and Development. 193

An Ongoing Process-Spanning and entire career; lifelong mentorship 196

Reimagining the Possibilities 198

An Intertwining Second Thread: Identity Formation 198

Looping in a Third Thread: Trusting Relationships 203

Our Mentoring Relationships 206

The Threads Begin to Come Together: Impacting Leadership Practice 209

CHAPTER 10: Dear Tom, Steve, Maureen and Sean 213

As We Entered Into a Relationship… 214

You Helped to Expand My Understanding… 215

Can I Make a Difference to and with Formalized Programs… 217

Mentor—Protégé—Co Mentor: A Challenge; A Commitment 220

Postscript 222

REFERENCES...224

APPENDIX A: Participant Letter 237

APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form 239

Chapter 1

Beginning the Journey

The Current Context of Mentoring: An Authoritative Voice

Increasing demands for educational accountability and continuous improvement in student achievement have changed the face of schools over the past ten years. Varying views on administrative practice, instructional methodology, integration of special needs students, rapidly advancing technology coupled with decreased funding and ongoing staff isolation, contribute to a system in need of support. At the same time, researchers and educators, parents, politicians and critics alike advance numerous and often conflicting strategies for improving administrative decision-making, the process of teaching and learning, and the sense of community within schools.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of reports predict that we are rapidly approaching an era of teacher and administrator shortages caused by fewer numbers of young people prepared to take on the challenges of teaching and fewer numbers of teachers willing to assume the myriad of responsibilities associated with leadership positions. An average of 30% of beginning teachers leave the profession during the first two years, and another 10-20% leave schools within the next five years (Halford, 1998). Similarly, a recent Alberta Teachers' Association survey indicated that significantly fewer teachers are interested in moving into leadership positions—down from 10% to 5% of those surveyed throughout the province (2001). Given these statistics, it is legitimate to ask how the educational system will continue to cope with demands for innovative school leadership.

In an attempt to address these growing concerns and alarming statistics, the education system has come to embrace mentoring as a strategy for offering support and guidance to increasing numbers of educators. The focus of many of the programs and initiatives in Alberta devoted to mentoring tends to be on such issues as supporting the development of knowledge, skills and attributes needed to be successful in teaching; providing opportunities to analyze and reflect on professional practice; initiating and building a foundation for the continued study of teaching and student learning; promoting personal and professional well-being; and improving teaching effectiveness. Wright and Wright (1987) assert, “by not mentoring, we are wasting talent. We educate and train but don’t nurture” (p. 207). Yet, in adapting mentoring concepts to the relationship between and among educators, strategies, guidelines, and programs have been developed and implemented to empower and support primarily beginning teachers.

However, the promise of mentoring goes far beyond helping novice teachers survive their first year of teaching and the subsequent positive impact on the mentor. Unfortunately, while there appears to be a wide range of data on formalized mentoring programs for beginning teachers, considerably less attention has been paid to the experiences of educational administrators with regards to mentorship. Just as teachers often find the basis of their formal pre-service training limited in meeting the actual demands that constitute the realities of their day-to-day work, so too do many administrators. The opportunities for “lived” practice are frequently less than required and many administrative training programs fail to fully prepare "students for the hectic pace and varied content of principal's work" (Anderson, 1991, p. 2). In essence, knowing about it, is different than knowing how to do it (Daresh, 2001).

A survey (2002) conducted by the Council on School Administration, a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association, appears to support this belief. Responses revealed that many school administrators, principals, and assistant principals alike, with varying degrees of experience, often feel isolated and poorly prepared to cope with the ever changing demands of their jobs. School administrators expressed a need for and desire to collaborate with colleagues and to have the benefit of mentorship-type programming designed to provide support, guidance, and opportunities to reflect on professional practice.

A Personal Context for Mentoring: My Own Voice

My own interest in mentoring-type relationships has evolved over time. During a career of 28 years, I have had the opportunity to teach in two Canadian provinces, three different countries and eight schools. I have experienced changing roles as teacher, counsellor, school and central office administrator. With each change, whether it was due to location, assignment or role and responsibilities, came similar feelings: uncertainty, anxiety, and trepidation albeit coupled with great enthusiasm and positive expectation. Questions such as: "How do we do things around here?"; "Where do I find this?"; "Was that the best way I could have handled that?"; "What role should I be playing in this situations?" abounded. In all cases, there never seemed to be a shortage of colleagues willing to provide some sort

of assistance nor did senior administrators refrain from offering advice, encouragement or guidance.

As I began to reflect on my own experiences I wondered if, through some of these relationships, I had benefited from a form of informal mentoring. Davis (2001) would argue that many teachers and administrators have enjoyed, at different times during their careers, a special and personal relationship with an experienced colleague—one who has served as an informal mentor, offering help, advice and companionship. My experiences had provided me with this type of support but had they also offered that aspect of mentoring which "promises a process designed to expand and deepen [professional] practice and habits…"? (Mullen & Lick 1999, p. 13). They were relationships which I valued but how had they affected me as a teacher and how had they influenced who I had become as a leader? Some colleagues spoke of a special individual who coached, nurtured, trained and protected them—a teacher of sorts and a friend. Others seemed to have had no such experience. I began to reflect on my own experience and those of other educators as I puzzled over the place of mentorship in today's educational environment. There appeared to be numerous books and manuals on the topic and the creation of formalized programming intended to replicate that which had, historically, been mainly informal. I saw this as an indication of a growing interest in the area but was concerned about the apparent lack of accounts describing the experiences of practicing educators.

In all the literature I examined, the benefits to both mentor and protégé were clearly delineated but I continued to have many unanswered questions. I sought to gain a better understanding of mentorship by immersing myself in the work of my school district. Our formalized program for beginning teachers was thriving and the feedback on all fronts was extremely positive. A colleague and I considered the possibility of extending the district's mandate and, in the 2000-2001 school year, we initiated a series of professional development workshops designed to address topics and areas of concern for beginning assistant principals. Somewhat surprisingly, these workshops attracted the attention of a full range of school-based administrators, including principals with many years of experience. We were amazed that these principals, our "elder statesmen and women", would attend workshops on such seemingly basic topics as school-based budgeting and creative timetabling. We came to learn, however, that, of primary importance to each participant was the opportunity to work collaboratively on issues pertinent to school leadership and to strengthen collegial ties and support systems. From these sessions came resounding support for some form of mentorship program, the only caveat that it be designed specifically to meet the unique needs of principals (and assistants) at any stage of their career.

In September 2003, in partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association and along with several principals and assistant principals, we implemented a new mentorship program intended specifically for school-based administrators. Immediately we were caught in a quandary, struggling with questions focusing on how our program should be shaped. As a small urban district we rarely had more than one or two novice administrators and all our principals come to their positions from an assistant principalship. We wanted to create something that would be meaningful for a diverse group of individuals and, once again, I became aware that there was little research to help us determine where the "right" path lay. Many of the available texts provided program guidelines, scenarios for discussion and self-examination, organizational benefits and developmental activities but failed to incorporate the voices and stories of administrators themselves, in particular those who had progressed beyond the initial year or two in the principalship. As I continued my research journey I was encouraged to find others who were exploring the possibilities and potential that mentorship seemed to offer, dissatisfied with traditional definitions and descriptions that limited programming and participation (Mullen, 1999; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Eby, 1997). They were examining collaborative partnerships, moving beyond the classical dyadic, hierarchical relationship and experimenting with such approaches as co-mentoring, e-mentoring and notions of lifelong mentoring, looking beyond the initial years and the transition periods in a person's career. Their experiences and their sharing of personal stories intrigued me and I became increasingly interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how school administrators had experienced mentorship. What would I discover? Would there be stories of the "great mentor" or stories of loneliness and isolation? What could I learn from these experiences and how would this greater understanding assist me personally and professionally? Would I be able to make a contribution and perhaps support others in reflecting on the topic of mentorship?

My doctoral studies provided me with just the right context in which to pursue the answers to some of my questions but I knew I needed to frame my work carefully if I was to gain the understanding I sought.

Purpose of the Study

In 1993 I celebrated the completion of my Masters' thesis and, as I looked back on that accomplishment some 10 years later, I realized I did not remember much of the research experience; the participants of the study were non-entities to me and the findings were simply the content I needed to finish the work. As a quantitative study it "emphasize[d] the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.4) but failed to establish any personal meaning or generate a transformation of understanding for me, as the researcher. The presence of that red covered text on my bookshelf served to remind me that I still needed and wanted to engage in a learning experience that promised "an intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4), one which would provide me with an opportunity to work collaboratively as a co-researcher with others and, in the doing, would lead me to a new place of understanding.

As I began to frame my doctoral study and to think of the questions I had regarding mentorship, I knew I was beginning down a very different path. This time, within a qualitative paradigm, I was hoping to come to a greater understanding of the lived experiences of the principals with whom I would be working and to add their voices and my own to the body of knowledge regarding

mentoring relationships. I would be entering a new arena, one in which there would be no absolute truth, where there would be messiness and uncertainty (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) but this was what I was seeking. I was encouraged in my undertaking by Kenyon (1996) who explains that, by sharing personal experiences we gain " ... access to new stories, new wrinkles in established patterns; in other words, new sources of meaning" (p. 32).

Michael Fullan (1992) has supported the need for "many more studies which examine holistically the inside-out picture of how the principal does and could manage the "field" of innovative possibilities facing him or her..." (p. 83). This notion of examining something from an "inside-out" perspective promised to open the door to truly understanding the experiences of others in an authentic and meaningful way but I knew it would also demand a willingness on my part, as the researcher, to enter the world of the research participant with humility and a desire to learn. Without such a willingness I could not hope to gain a truly "inside-out" understanding of the experiences of another person and it was this that I hoped to achieve.

The role of the school principal, like that of the teacher, can be quite isolating, perhaps, in many ways, even more so than that of a teacher. I believed sharing the stories of principals who had experienced mentorship would help to create a richer understanding of the world of school leaders and how such relationships may have nurtured them and/or supported their growth and development as leaders.

Blending the understanding gained from principal's experiences with current practice would offer insight into the development of meaningful support systems for school administrators, especially at a time when increasing numbers of experienced administrators were calling for greater collaboration and support and when school jurisdictions and the Alberta Teachers' Association were exploring the efficacy of formalized mentoring programs

Research Question

This research was framed with the following question in mind:

> What are principals' experiences of mentoring within their professional lives?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it addresses a timely topic in the field of education and educational leadership. Given the increased interest in and commitment to mentorship in the field of education, the results of this study contribute to our understanding of the diverse needs of school principals in the area of mentoring. Knowledge in this area is increasingly important for responding to the ever-changing nature of today's schools and the demands being placed on educational leaders. A deeper understanding of the nature of mentoring experiences from a wide range of sources may lead to innovative and collaborative initiatives designed to support mentoring as a meaningful resource.

This study will also add to the literature, particularly in the area of descriptive studies honoring the voices of practitioners, providing additional insight on the topic and contributing to a richer understanding of the mentoring relationship. My hope is that this study may encourage others to engage in further research, which will assist in broadening and enriching our knowledge and understanding of the mentoring experience. Finally, although the study was limited to the lived experiences of four principals, I believe there are aspects of the study that will resonate with other practitioners as they resonated for me.

The potential of stories to resonate within others was reinforced for me in one of my university classes. In conjunction with an assignment, I had met with Keith, a beginning principal, who shared with me his experience of entering into the world of school administration. Having been an extremely successful elementary teacher, he found his initial months as an assistant principal difficult.

> **"It was really hard becoming an assistant principal and living in that middle space, kind of torn between two worlds. I still loved teaching but on the staff I wasn't really viewed as being a teacher any more; I was viewed as an administrator so I wasn't part of…included in… the Teacher Club. That was new and hard for me."**

This notion of there being a "Teacher Club," a place for 'insiders,' was one that had faded in my memory. Reflecting on my own experiences as a teacher reminded me of the automatic entry I had had into this supportive network, the bond we shared as practitioners in the classroom, the stories of success and challenge and the ways in which, together, we had laughed and struggled through good and bad times. Now, as a principal, Keith was revisiting the trepidation and uncertainty he felt in his initial years as an assistant principal.

> **"It's a concern for me. I want to make sure I do the right thing. It surprises me that I'm in charge of a school and no one phones to follow-up. How's it**

> going? Just being there. I could phone but it's different. I take it as, they must think I'm doing O.K. I always know I could phone but it's nice to have people phone---are you O.K. with this? Do you understand it? Because, in many ways, I'm not sure. And in some ways, I don't even know what I don't know."

On recounting the story of "Keith" to my class of fellow graduate students, one colleague leapt from her seat and exclaimed, "That's my story. Those are my words!" As a beginning principal herself, Keith's experiences resonated within her and I was amazed at the intensity and passion with which she connected to his story and the relief she indicated in learning that others could identify with or understood, in a very personal way, her experiences. Another, more experienced principal, indicated she too had felt exactly like this and there were times when she still experienced similar feelings. Keith's story had opened the door to both these principals, inviting them to share their own experiences and explore common concerns.

As a researcher, the opportunity of entering into a relationship with four experienced principals and sharing those stories that resonate within them, within me and, potentially, within others is what excited me, pushed me onward and promised me the opportunity to connect with and enhance my own and others' understanding of the very personal experiences of mentoring in a professional life.

Chapter 2

Turning to the Literature

A Conceptual Framework for Mentoring: The Authoritative Voice

For the purposes of beginning this study and providing a framework for my early exploration and learning, I narrowed the focus of the formal literature review to four areas: a definition of mentoring; informal versus formal mentoring relationships; the reported benefits of mentoring; and alternative approaches to traditional mentoring. With this framework as a starting point, I was able to gain an initial understanding of mentorship and to develop a context in which to place the stories and shared experiences of my research participants. I was also provided with a starting point from which to begin an exploration of possibilities.

The concept of mentoring relationships-- intended to help, to aid, to advise, to counsel-- is not new. Historically, mentoring can be traced back to ancient Greek times. In Homer's, *The Odyssey*, Athena, when asked to watch over and teach Telemachus while his father Odysseus is absent, takes on the persona of an old and trusted soldier. She moves from her power position of goddess, daughter of Zeus, to a character with whom Telemachus can identify and with whom he can be confident in learning the ways of his world. Odysseus entrusts his son to Athena but, because she is aware of the resistance to a "God" arriving on his doorstep with "self help" instructions, she adopts a disguise, that of the old and experienced warrior. She adopts the name of Mentor for her new persona and assumes a human form dedicated to protect, to teach and to provide over the period of time that it takes for Telemachus to grow into manhood. Most importantly, she teaches Telemachus to think and act for himself (Kay, 1990).

We can also find similar examples of nurturing and teaching relationships throughout religious history. Within the Judeo-Christian narrative we see many examples of angels adopting human form to teach and support as well as to transform unbelievers. As with Athena, the Christian God adopts a human figure filled with humility and suffering in order to "mentor" such young men as Peter and Paul. Similarly, within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition we also notice the "teacher" assuming another, more accessible persona in order to address the student's needs.

Authors, Huang and Lynch (1995), take us back to an early form of mentoring evident in the succession practices of three Chinese kings who lived between 2333 and 2177 B.C. Their focus was on sharing learning and wisdom more than guiding the development of another and, as such, they open the door for us to think about mentoring in even broader and more diverse ways. These writers invite us to consider mentoring from the perspective of shared learning and growth in which both participants can benefit from mutual interaction and support. Their focus is less on the teaching role and more on how individuals can learn together.

Throughout history there have been numerous well-known relationships. Socrates and Plato; Aristotle and Alexander the Great; Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller; Freud and Jung and their great accomplishments help to reinforce the belief that certain types of mentoring can greatly influence a person's life. One need only consider some of these historical references to the mentoring process to hear their echo in the current interest within a number of organizations to establish formalized programs. The derivation of the word mentor may lie in the story of Odysseus, yet the process of helping, of educating and supporting through the formation of trusting relationships between the knowledge owner and the knowledge seeker, seems universal.

Examining historical roots and reviewing research findings dedicated to this topic can assist us in beginning to understand and appreciate the full value and potential of mentoring for our present day context. It also helps to inform our understanding of the characteristics that appear critical to the development of formal programs designed to provide meaningful mentoring experiences.

The literature on mentoring relationships-- both formal and informal-- provided a grounding for this study and a review of the associated literature reasonably begins with an examination of what mentoring is and the benefits it purports to offer to its participants. Given the current trend towards mentoring programs, this appears to be a relevant exercise particularly since some researchers suggest that the word "mentoring" has been used to denote such a vast array of relationships that the term has started to lose some of its value. Definitions have become so varied and, in some cases, so all-inclusive, that few would think they could ever hope to develop a meaningful, formalized program or function as a competent mentor. In fact, in many cases, "mentoring" is a term which has become quite ambiguous, (Dodgson, 1992). However, while researchers continue to work towards a clear definition and description of mentoring, many organizations have implemented formal programs without really explaining to their employees what the term means and how one might or should function as a mentor or protégé. It is, therefore, "left to employees to translate this buzzword into action" (Steinberg and Foley, 1999, p. 2).

Within the educational environment, the Alberta Teachers' Association has been instrumental in examining the efficacy of mentoring and in clarifying the roles of those involved. In their 1999 Research Monograph, Mentoring, (No. 39), they refer to Healy and Welchert (1990) who define mentoring by commenting on the beneficial outcomes for participants;

> for the protégé, the object of mentoring is the achievement of an identity transformation, a movement from the status of understudy to that of self-directing colleague. For the mentor, the relationship is a vehicle for achieving midlife generativity. (p. 1)

Within this definition, we are able to tease out a common understanding of who may typically be involved in mentoring and the main function of the relationship. Traditionally, mentoring has been viewed as a hierarchical relationship involving two people, the protégé and the mentor. Moore and Salimbene (1981) refer to the connection shared by these participants as an "intense, lasting and professionally centered relationship between two individuals" (p. 53).

In the educational context to date, the role of the protégé has been assumed primarily by the beginning teacher who, after appropriate pre-service training, is just starting out on his/her career. Healy and Welchert (1990) refer to this individual as an "understudy," drawing a connection between the protégé and "one who studies a superior performer's part in order to be able to take it if required; a thing that is an exact repetition of another, a duplicate or exact copy, two of the same kind" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2003).

The function of the relationship is to bring about an identity transformation in the protégé resulting in a self-directing, fully competent colleague (Healy & Welchert, 1990). Mentors are generally considered to be individuals with the experience and knowledge that can facilitate and support this type of transformation. They possess the skills and commitment to provide both professional and personal support to their protégés (Kram, 1985). Within this present reference we can assume that the mentor will be a more experienced educator ("the wise warrior") who, by way of guidance, advice, support and feedback assists with the development and identity transformation of the protégé. The process is not, however, one-sided, and we see, within Healy and Welchert's definition and others (Smith 1989), that both of the partners will benefit, albeit in differing ways, from their ongoing relationship.

For the mentor, we might expect there to be some form of mid-life generativity which Erickson (1950) defines as an interest in guiding the next generation and which Kotre (1999/2000) views as "the desire to make one's life count" (p.1). This drive, which is generally more pronounced in the midlife years, often displays itself in acts that provide and care for the next generation, leaving a legacy for those who follow (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1998).

While the initial definition (Healy & Welchert, 1990) provides us with a starting point with regards to a general understanding of mentoring, a further examination of the literature is necessary to begin to develop a more complete appreciation of the complexities associated with mentoring and the mentoring relationship; some of the more recent thinking about the structure and potential mentoring may hold; and how these understandings may apply to mentorship at the administrative level.

Mentorship: Coming to an Initial Understanding of the Term

Owens et al. (1998) define mentoring quite simply, indicating it is, "a supportive and nurturing relationship between an experienced professional—the mentor—and an aspiring protégé" (p. 78). Alleman, Cochrane, Doverspike and Newman (1984), among others (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000; Haney, 1997; Whitehead, 1995), add that the mentor is typically one of greater rank or expertise who teaches, guides and develops a novice in an organization or profession. In an effort to further capture the essence of mentoring, an array of words has been used to describe the role of the mentor. Sullivan (1992) indicates this role can be "synonymous with teacher, coach, trainer, role model, nurturer, leader, talent-developer and opener of doors" (cited in Janus, 1996, p. 60). Many others concur: Bey and Holmes (1992), refer to "the guide"; Crow and Matthews (1998), "the role model"; Jacobi (1991), "the counselor, coach or sponsor". The variety of terms and number of metaphors suggest the role of the mentor is complex and multi-faceted adapting, perhaps, to the needs of the individual and the circumstances of the moment. Nevertheless, within these perspectives, the role of the mentor and how he/she functions, appears to be critical to the effectiveness and success of the relationship. According to Janas (1996), the mentor is the "linchpin" of any mentoring program. Therefore, the ideal mentor should possess the expertise, commitment and time to provide assistance. Wills and Kaiser (2002) agree that the mentor's role is pivotal in helping the protégé to define and shape what he/she needs and wants and then in providing the specific input, support and skill development for protégés to use in meeting their self-identified goals.

Mentorship: The Mentor

In the classical or more traditional view the mentor typically functions as an 'expert' providing authentic experiential opportunities in order to facilitate the learning of a novice or protégé. Vance (2000) indicates, "an ideal mentor is not only skilled, competent and self-confident but also generous, involved and committed to the relationship. An ultimate reward for the mentor is the experience of seeing a protégé be highly successful" (p. 25). In conjunction with noting that the most frequently mentioned characteristic of effective mentors is a willingness to nurture another person, Freeman (1993) reminds us that it is, in fact, the relationship that develops between the mentor and the protégé that is at the heart of the supportive process. As learning takes place within a social context, relationship is an essential component to any partnership. As a result, effective mentoring can only occur when solid relationships have been established and there is an associated level of trust between the participating individuals. "With trust as a foundation of the relationship, mentors give protégés a safe place to try out ideas, skills and roles with minimal risk" (Kaye & Jacobson, 1996, p. 45).

Caravalho and Maus (1996) refer to a relationship that is unique and personal while Hardcastle (1988) defines it as "mutual, comprehensive, informal, interactive and enduring, with mentors assuming the role of 'spiritual supporter'" (p. 203). The Dictionary of Occupational Titles reinforces the importance of the interpersonal nature of mentoring by ranking it as "the highest and most complex level of functioning in the people-related hierarchy of skills" (cited in Alleman, Cochran, Doverspike, & Newman, 1984, p. 331).

Informal versus Formal Relationships

While many of the mentoring relationships referred to in the literature tend to focus on informal relationships, mentoring can occur either informally or formally. Informal mentoring refers to a relationship that develops spontaneously or naturally. Sometimes referred to as "authentic" mentoring (Davis 2001; Malone, 2001), it describes "a voluntary and ultimately personal relationship between two individuals. No one can mandate and monitor such a relationship…It is a relationship of person to person, in mutuality, that pursues community" (Davis, 2001, p. 2). Chao et al. (1992) further define informal mentorship as that which is "not managed, structured nor formally recognized. Traditionally they are spontaneous relationships that occur without external involvement" (p. 2). Ellis, Small-McGinley and De Fabrizio (2001) broaden the differentiation by explaining that, "at the heart of natural or spontaneous mentoring has been the desire to provide assistance during a time of transition and that the goal is to help with social learning and increase the [individual's] command over tasks in their everyday lives" (p. 4).

Within organizations, these types of informal mentoring relationships have not been uncommon in the past however, they have often been criticized as creating an invisible and somewhat elusive network frequently referred to as the "Old Boys' Club." In these instances powerful older males advantage younger versions of themselves by grooming them to move up the corporate ladder (Missirian, 1982; Battin, 1996; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). As a result of this process, protégés have been "expected to maintain the leadership styles, standards and cultural mores," of their mentors (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p.5). This type of "mentoring" has tended to favor men (specifically white males). As a result, many others, including women and minority groups, have frequently been disadvantaged by their exclusion from these types of mentoring opportunities (Malone, 2001; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). However, this may be changing as organizations work towards implementing formal programs. Gunn (1995) suggests that formalizing mentorship through sponsored programs has resulted in, "a more democratic approach to mentoring… [one that is] open to more employees at more levels" (p. 66).

Despite the range of research on informal mentoring relationships and the benefits they seem to offer to participants and organizations, it is often difficult to fully understand how they are formed, nurtured and maintained. Hence, cultivating similar types of relationships and experiences through formalized programs can be a challenge. Kram (1985) suggests that informal relationships are frequently driven by individual developmental needs. By contrast, formal mentoring relationships are often created and developed with organizational assistance or intervention which typically includes matching protégés and mentors and involving them in a structured program designed to meet some aspects of organizational need. In addition, formal relationships often last for a shorter period of time-- between six months and one year-- and the style, frequency and location of interaction may result in less personal commitment or may be more formally dictated in a contract established by the organization, (Murray, 1991; Poldre, 1994). Often formal mentors are directed to focus on career goals that are short-term and applicable to the person's current position or towards new employee orientation and on-the-job training (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). As a result, Raggins and Cotton (1999) observe that, because formal and informal relationships vary on such a number of dimensions, the level of satisfaction obtained from the relationship and the benefits to the organization and the individuals may be considerably different.

Benefits of Mentoring

In examining the value of mentoring, Kram (1985) suggests that two distinct functions are addressed: the enhancement of a career as well as psychosocial development. The former includes "providing sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments and activities which directly relate to the protégé's career advancement" (p. 2). The latter involves, " providing role modeling, acceptance, confirmation, counseling and friendship-- activities that influence the protégé's self-image and competence" (p. 2). Crow and Matthews (1998) add a third function, that of professional development specifically focusing on the knowledge, skills, behaviors and values important to the organization and considered essential for the position which the individual is assuming. Hart (1993) cautions, however, that often technical, or job performance, skills may be benefits emphasized to the exclusion of affective or emotional growth. In the field of teaching and educational administration it may be particularly important to also pay sufficient attention to the psychosocial development of the individual (Morrison, 2005; Hoerr, 2005).

Among the psychosocial needs of educators we find isolation has long been recognized as a concern in the life of the classroom teacher hence the increasing support for formal mentoring programs (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). Similarly, "Research on the life of the administrator… shows consistently that [it also] is lonely, frustrating and full of interpersonal conflict. As a result, the need for someone to provide for the school administrator's psychosocial development is clear" (Daresh, 2001, p. 25).Therefore, mentorship programming for administrative staff would be well advised to emphasize more than just the technical aspects of the job.

In pursuing the purported benefits of mentoring, Gehrke (1988) suggests that, through mentoring, one of the most important benefits is that protégés gain in wisdom and awakening:

> A transformation results from being given the mentor's gift of wisdom. There is a stirring, a recognition of the import of the gift, of the strength or talent, of the possibilities for one's life-- a point where someone sees the potential for genius in you. This the mentor sets in motion for the protégé by both providing a new vision of life and supporting the protégé in believing he/she can fulfill the vision. (p. 191)

The wisdom that is shared by a mentor is that which has been accumulated over many years of experience, practice, training and professional development. Aubrey and Cohen (1995) describe wisdom as "a personal capacity acquired through experience and thinking; [but] it is also the ability to create learning experiences for others and manage learning processes in an organization" (p. 13). They identify mentors as key in sharing their own acquired wisdom, establishing learning relationships and "taking responsibility for the personal and professional development of others" (p. 31).

Examining the possibilities and potential from a different perspective, Roberts (2000) undertook a phenomenological review of the current literature on mentoring and identified nine of the specific personal, professional and organizational benefits that occur as a result of the mentoring process:

1. latent abilities are discovered
2. performance improvement
3. retention of staff
4. growth in professional confidence
5. personal growth of mentor and protégé
6. increased awareness of role in the organization
7. increased effectiveness in the organization
8. self-actualization
9. protégé becomes a mentor

In summary he indicates that mentoring is,

> …an active relationship; a helping process; a formalized process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective practice; a career and personal development process; and a role constructed by and for a mentor (p. 165).

Given the organizational, career-related and psychosocial benefits attributed to mentoring, it is not surprising to see many work environments and school jurisdictions moving towards developing formalized programming in an attempt to replicate the advantages available to those in informal partnerships. The Mentoring Institute (1997) describes a 'new mentoring paradigm' involving today's protégés who, although better educated, "still need a mentor's practical know-how and wisdom (craft knowledge) that can be acquired only experientially. Therefore, many organizations are instituting formal mentoring programs as a cost-effective way to upgrade skills, enhance recruitment and retention and increase job satisfaction" (Jossi, 1997, p. 52).

As well, organizations of all kinds are realizing that collaborative relationships, an essential component of the mentoring process, are one of the most productive ways to think and work together (DuFour & Eaker 1998; Eaker, DuFour, & Burnette, 2002). This collaborative approach tends to represent a major cultural transformation from isolation and individualism to interactive, cooperative knowledge sharing and collaborative problem solving (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Kochen and Trimble (2000) stress that mentoring may be one of the most effective ways of acquiring the professional and personal skills necessary for succeeding in today's collaborative workplaces.

However, several researchers caution that we must be careful in trumpeting the numerous benefits of mentoring as though they are evident in all such relationships; mentoring is not a simple all-or-nothing matter (Allan & Poteet, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1999; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000) They recognize that there may be considerable variation in the level of satisfaction obtained from mentoring experiences and, as with other types of working relationships, mentoring relationships, mentors and protégés fall along a continuum.

Alternative Approaches to Traditional Mentoring

As organizations continue to learn more about informal mentoring relationships and to use this knowledge to create formal programs, some of the current researchers in the field are examining mentorship from a variety of differing perspectives and seeking new ways to advance the potential of such experiences. Kochen and Trimble (2000) have taken exception to the more traditional view that paints the protégé as someone "waiting to be discovered" (the understudy) rather than as an individual discovering him/herself with a mentor who acts as a co-learner throughout this process of discovery. Bonda, Rinehart and Volbrecht (1995) use the term co-mentoring and refer to a relationship which is "reciprocal and mutual" (p. 119). This type of interdependence is supported by Dingman (2002) who defines mentoring as a process that involves two or more individuals and "results in reaching a higher level than one would reach separately as it brings out the best in each other" (p. 30). In a similar vein Daresh and Playko (1990) encourage us to consider the mentoring process as a shared learning experience for both participants as they help each other examine options for resolving problems. They reinforce the importance of a two-way, reciprocal process that is maintained in a risk-free environment where both the mentor and the protégé are "encouraged to express inner feelings, thoughts and questions regarding their professional roles or personal problems" (p. 125). Mullen and Lick (1999) have labeled this "synergistic co-mentoring."

Kealy and Mullen (1999) in examining the function and role of mentoring would argue that it should be expanded to encourage a view that is more than just a one-time occurrence. Instead, teaching and learning must be seen as an ongoing activity woven throughout the course of one's life. They draw a powerful analogy in suggesting lifelong mentoring is very similar to the well-established idea of lifelong learning. These authors define the concept of lifelong mentoring as "the process of continually seeking, finding and reconstructing mentoring and co-mentoring relationships through which one can become enabled, empowered and self-actualized" (p. 189). They acknowledge Dewey's influence (1934) in explaining their meaning for lifelong mentoring as the "activity setting educators create as they shape experience, establishing conditions to promote experiences that lead to growth" (p.195).

Kealy and Mullen (1999) provide us with further clarity when they explain that lifelong mentoring is not meant to imply an extended relationship with just one person. Rather, it is meant to suggest an "ongoing commitment to seek opportunities for mentoring and being mentored as well as for learning and sharing the value of one's experiences" (p. 192). Such a view opens the door to a number of mentors throughout the course of one's career and places the protégé in a more equal, democratic and active role. Zachary (2000) uses the term "learning partnership" in discussing her understanding of mentorship. In this case, the protégé plays a more active role in the learning and the mentor shifts from that of "sage on the stage" to that of "guide on the side." Today, "wisdom is not passed from an authoritarian teacher to a supplicant student but is discovered in a learning relationship in which both stand to gain a greater understanding of the workplace and the world" (Aubrey & Cohen, 1995 as cited in Zachary, 2000, p. 3). Instead of being mentor driven, both partners share responsibility and accountability for the relationship and for achieving the established goals.

Crow and Matthews (1989), through their work in the mentoring of educational administrators, have also seen the definition of mentoring evolve. They now use the term

> in a broader, more dynamic and metaphorical manner. [Their] definition of a mentor in an administrative context involves a person who is active, dynamic, visionary, knowledgeable and skilled; who has a committed philosophy that keeps the teaching and learning of students in focus; and who guides other leaders to be similarly active and dynamic. The process of mentoring dynamic school leaders involves more than a single mentor, more than a single setting and more than just 'rookie protégés.' (p. 2)

Barth (1997) also asserts that dynamic leadership involves cultivating a learning community in which the leader is also a learner. He argues that principals cannot lead where they are not willing to go themselves. "Being engaged in a mentoring relationship offers the opportunity to be an active learner and to model this commitment to learning to all staff" (p. 46).

Crow and Matthews (1989) remind us of the potential of collaborative relationships and the isolation felt by principals throughout all career stages and they argue that mentoring offers to fill this gap. However, there is still much work to be done if we are to create programs and formalize experiences that will be meaningful and useful to today's educational leaders.

It was this need and potential that fueled my interest in examining the stories principals had to tell in recounting their experiences of being in a mentoring relationship and the influence mentoring had had on their professional and leadership practice.

Chapter 3

Understanding Through Narrative Inquiry

An Inside-Out Examination

In his book, *Successful School Improvement*, Michael Fullan (1992) refers to the need for more research examining "holistically the inside-out picture" of what the principal does and could manage within the 'field' of innovative possibilities facing him or her" (p. 83). He suggests that, in order to fully understand the complexities faced by these individuals, we have to be able to enter their world, share in their lived experiences and, in doing so, "look deeper and more holistically at [their] role" (p. 84). Goodson (1995) leads us to believe that, "narrative methods and storying represent the lived experiences of schooling" (p. 89) and as such, they help us to learn more about schools and the lives of those who are involved with and connected to schools. Added to this are the observations of Gardner (1991) who makes a strong argument for examining stories in an attempt to learn more about the "life" of those in leadership roles. "Leadership is a process that occurs within the minds of individuals who live in a culture—a process that entails the capacities to create stories, to understand and evaluate these stories, and to appreciate the struggle among stories" (Gardner, cited in Segiovanni, 2000, p. 169).

By undertaking this study, which focused on the lived experiences of four principals as expressed through the stories they told, I intended to expand the "inside-out" understanding of the ways in which they had experienced and come to understand mentoring.

Research Approach: Turning to Narrative Inquiry

Qualitative research, with its focus on meaning and how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Creswell, 1994), provided the necessary guiding framework for this study and allowed for the type of descriptive examination of process, structure and meaning that I sought to accomplish. Within the broad scope of qualitative research, the study focused more specifically on narrative inquiry.

In coming to a decision about the efficacy of narrative inquiry I read and reflected extensively, keeping foremost in my mind the intended purpose of this study: gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and the role mentoring had played within these experiences.

Witherall and Noddings (1991) direct our attention to the centrality of narrative in our lives: "the stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture" (p.1). Lieblich et al. (1998) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) reinforce this understanding by explaining that people are storytellers by nature and that we explain and make sense of our lives through the stories we tell. Because our "stories provide coherence and continuity to [our] experience" they offer shape and foundation to our lives and they provide our listeners with the opportunity to more fully understand our experiences as we have lived and framed them and come to understand them ourselves (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7).

The importance of stories in our lives and the potential they have in helping us understand the lives of others is also highlighted by Carter (1993) who notes:

> Story is a mode of knowing that captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs...this richness and nuance cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact or abstract propositions. It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story. (p. 6)

If I were to come to a deeper understanding of mentorship as experienced by educational leaders, accessing their stories would provide me the opportunity I was seeking. Lieblich et al. (1998) encouraged my thinking, "One of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experienced reality" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7).

Bruner (1985) reinforced my commitment to narrative by explaining that stories are "concerned with the explication of human intentions in the context of action" (p. 100) and it is this feature of narrative that has made it particularly useful in the study and understanding of teaching.

> Teaching is intentioned action in situations and the core knowledge teachers have of teaching comes from their practice. Teacher knowledge is, in other words, event structured and stories, therefore, would seem to provide special access to that knowledge. (Carter, cited in Bruner, 1985, p. 7)

In keeping with Bruner's observations of teaching, Sergiovanni (1987) provided further support in depicting the role of the principal as also reflecting "intentioned action" and being "event structured " As he explains,

> It is not sufficient to study the principalship just by accumulating knowledge of its basic theories and concepts. Theoretical knowledge must be interpreted in light of the specific contexts and situations within which principals work....Professional practice within education...is goal-oriented and action-oriented. (p. 3)

Given that educational administration follows in a similar vein as teaching, I believed that the core knowledge principals possess also came from their practice and their lived experiences. Therefore it seemed that their stories would provide access to this knowledge and insight. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) note, through story telling we are able to share, understand, reframe, retell, recollect and reimagine our lives. Thus, they explain,

> Teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities and relive the changed stories…As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (p. 12)

Regardless of our position on the educational landscape, our lived stories will be complex, interconnected and multiple. We are continuously engaged in the process of authoring our lives within those contexts that shape us (Carr, 1986) and, by attending to the stories we live, tell and retell of our selves, we come to better understand our own experiences and ourselves. Clandinin and Connelly (1999) indicate that our stories give clarity to the relationship between knowledge, context and identity. In their unraveling of this concept (1988) they advance the term, "personal practical knowledge" explaining,

> teachers are knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (p. 25).

They add to the notion of personal practical knowledge the concept of a professional knowledge landscape, reinforcing that teachers' personal, practical knowledge is shaped and influenced by the context in which they live and work. This landscape metaphor allows Clandinin and Connelly to weave together the notion of space, place and time. As a result, the landscape metaphor,

> has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places and things. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 4-5).

Ultimately they incorporate within this framework, the question of identity, the ways in which educators come to compose, sustain and change their understandings of themselves as teachers and leaders. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) go on to explain that the writing and sharing of stories helps us to clarify and understand what we know and believe and ultimately these "stories to live by" link knowledge, context and identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999. p. 4).

However, because teaching and leading are complex tasks, the individual's understanding of them becomes deeply buried in everyday experience and grounded in an intuitive sense of "how best to perform the job that he/she is unable to readily articulate what [he/she] knows" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 128). Schon (1987) believes this type of knowledge can best be elicited through reflection or 'thinking again' which Dewey (1938) argued drove human experience and was the source of education. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) concur,

> storytelling is a reflective act. Stories are not icons to be learned but inquiries on which further inquiry takes place through their telling and through response to them. In this way, thinking again, relationship and storytelling are interrelated.

> Stories of professional practice are stories of relationship and they are stories of thinking again. (p. 156)

If, as many authors argue, (Lieblich et al., 1998; Lambert et al., 1995; Bateson, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1995), people live storied lives on storied landscapes and make meaning of their lives through stories, then we should pay heed to Polkinghorne's (1988) advice stressing "the importance of having research strategies that can work with the narratives people use to understand the human world" (p. xi). My goal was to understand the world of the participating school principals and the role mentorship played in that world and I was convinced their stories held the understanding I was seeking. Carter (1993) supports the concept of undertaking research designed to examine experience as lived and told stories:

> Stories become a way of capturing the complexity, specificity and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and thus redress the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness. (p. 6)

By engaging in a study which focused on the lived experiences of school principals, and by encouraging ongoing reflection and the sharing of stories of professional practice I felt confident that the narrative inquiry process would help me work towards a "deeper and more holistic understanding" (Fullan, 1992, p. 84) of the principal's world. As Boostram (1994) observes, we must be prepared to move inside or we will miss the story altogether; Bach (2001) reaffirms, it is the story that promises to provide us with "a picture of real people in real situations struggling with real problems" (p. 7).

The Study: Locating Myself Within Narrative

"The study of narrative is no longer the province of literary specialists or folklorists…but has now become a positive source of insight for all branches of human and natural science" (Mitchell, 1981, p. ix).

> Writing a story… is one way of discovering sequence in experience, of stumbling upon cause and effect in the happenings of a writer's own life.... Connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together. Experiences too indefinite of outline in themselves to be recognized for themselves, connect and are identified as a larger shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect (Welty, 1984, p. 90, cited in Witherell and Noddings, 1991).

I am convinced that I have been coming to narrative inquiry over many years, step by step, story by story and I feel a sense of "arrival" as I discover others who value stories as I do and as I learn more about how stories can help us to understand an individual's lived experiences. On a subconscious level I did not need to be told that stories are so much more than just interesting tales but that they also carry powerful messages about who we are, where we come from, what we value, and what has influenced us. My own life is a collection of stories, some of which have faded with time and others which, if I scratch just a little, rise to the surface as if

they "happened just yesterday." They are all, nonetheless, important to me as they help to define my life as I have come to understand it…

My parents were immigrants, coming to Canada after the war, my Dad from France and my mother from Great Britain. Montreal seemed the right choice; a truly bilingual city where my father could be immersed in the French language and culture that were so important to him and my mother could still find an abundance of the British ways of life. For a young girl, the diversity of these two cultures seemed to coexist quite happily as they translated themselves into such childhood activities as shopping at Ogilvie's (a very British flagship) for school uniforms and munching on croissants and chocolate during the ride home.

Family stories played a significant role in my growing up years. With all our extended family in Britain and France, the way we situated ourselves within our larger family context was to listen to, savor, retell and embellish the stories my parents shared with us. Visits back and forth, between the "Old Country" and the new, provided opportunities to add to our repertoire and soon enough we were making our own stories, sharing these at the Sunday dinner table or simply keeping them to ourselves, as part of our own, personal narrative. As we gather together now, coming from various parts of Canada to reconnect and imbue our own children with a sense of who they are within this larger family network, the stories spill over and I am amazed at how one remembers it this way and another that. Did we not all grow up in the same house, with the same parents? How could something so important and meaningful to one, have been so completely missed by the others? When my brothers tell a story, how could they have seen it that way when it clearly happened otherwise? And yet, there are always those moments when we speak with a shared voice, when the experience rings true for all of us and we feel connected at a very foundational level.

Despite having grown up in such a storied environment, throughout the initial stages of my doctoral work I found myself struggling to give a written voice to my experiences. I heard myself say, on numerous occasions, "I have no stories, at least none that really count." Upon reflection I imagine I was trying to find just the "right" story, the one that clearly and succinctly explained why I chose to devote myself to graduate study and to invest so much time and energy to the topic of mentorship and the methodology of narrative inquiry. I reflected over years of stories, trying to shape one or two in such a way that the reader would nod and agree that these particular experiences explained how I had come to this work and how my past had helped to influence this present moment.

Throughout the research process I kept a journal, writing about the little stories as well as the big trying to remove the expectation of locating the "right" story. Emily Carr speaks of moments and scraps and I was encouraged in this undertaking by her words, "the little scraps and nothingness of my life have made up a definite pattern" (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104).

My personal struggle assisted me in reflecting on the task I asked of my participants and the importance of establishing a trusting, supportive and collaborative relationship between myself, as researcher, and each of these individuals. Together we developed relationships of respect and companionship as we composed stories, honoring the moments and the scraps as equally as the stories.

Over the course of a six-month period my research study involved four principals in school jurisdictions including my own and others with schools located in both suburban and rural communities in Alberta. Through my ongoing relationship with these principals I came to understand how they framed mentorship and how their experiences helped to compose, sustain and/or change their identities and practices as school leaders. In considering Clandinin and Connelly's (1999) observations that storytelling is a reflective practice, it was critically important for me, as the researcher, to ensure that time and attention were devoted to developing trusting, caring and respectful relationships with each of my participants. As these authors point out (2000), "What is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the relationship" (p. 94). In many ways, my participants became colleagues, friends and co-researchers as we worked and shared together in the creation of the research text and I came to learn that they were concerned with having their stories told in such a way that, upon the reading, the telling resonated not simply for others but most importantly, within themselves.

The Study: My Role As Researcher

The relational quality of narrative inquiry assumes that both the participants and the researcher will be reflected in the work and I worked diligently to ensure the stories selected for inclusion in the final dissertation reflected the voices of my participants. Copies of transcripts were provided for their review and reflection and draft chapters were offered for their input, feedback and retelling.

The use of reflective journaling provided me an additional opportunity to give voice to my own stories, to tell and retell my experiences. This exercise also helped me to locate myself within the research process. Gadamer (1976) has suggested that, by recording what is going on during the research process, we begin to create a context for the decisions we make as researchers. Writing about myself, in a personal and revealing way, about my wonderings, experiences, ideas, insights and feelings was not an easy task and yet the process of keeping this type of journal helped me to gain deeper insight into myself, the meanings I attached to my own experiences and the stories I had to tell. In just such a way, Holly (1989) promises that this sort of undertaking can help to, "introduce the writer to the writer" and help to facilitate a greater understanding of oneself. Pinar (1998) explains, "Understanding of self is not narcissism, it is a precondition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others," (p. 150) and so, as a result of this counsel I knew my journey was following a necessary path.

Through my journal entries I came to a better understanding of my own experiences and I began to see similarities as well as differences between my participants and myself. I also saw reflections of my own experiences in theirs and spaces between their lived experiences and my own. My stories, interspersed throughout the research text and within a chapter of their own, gave me an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of myself as an individual, an educator, a leader and a researcher and to explore the ways in which mentoring has influenced my life. The process of writing my own stories also helped to define the context within which this dissertation was composed.

The Study: Shaping the Process

The field text for this narrative inquiry evolved over a six-month period and consisted of field notes, transcripts from interviews, personal journal entries, and several artifacts. These artifacts consisted of such things as school newsletters, personally selected quotations of participants and any other materials that triggered memories, experiences and stories. All of this helped shed light on how participants, "composed their lives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 420) and the role mentoring played in that composition.

Some readers may question the value of stories that relate to past experiences arguing they are but recollections, subject to the passage of time and memory. However, in working within the framework of narrative inquiry, participants are invited to share stories and experiences as they are presently understood, acknowledging that every story reflects a lived past, a present understanding and an intended future. "A narrative understanding of who we are and what we know, therefore, is a study of our whole life…[and]…acknowledges the tensions and differences within each of us" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 26). It is always important for the reader, as well as those involved in the research process, to keep in mind that while stories may be crystallized in and for a moment, there is also a sense of the fluid. As they continue to evolve they develop nuances, depth, subtlety, complexities and new understandings that may not have previously been available to the individual. "New revelations of meaning open out of their images and patterns, continually stirred into reach by our own growth and changing circumstances" (Hughes, 1988, p. 35, cited in Egan & Nadaner). In the end, however, "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (King, 2003, p.2).

Throughout the study careful attention was paid to the development of the participant-researcher relationship to ensure a safe place to examine a full range of stories, some of which were very personal, sensitive and revealing. As well, careful, thoughtful interaction, methods of evoking memories and adequate time to develop relationship and rapport were important in accessing the description and detail necessary for an insightful study.

Finally, the role and influence of the researcher was always a consideration, one which I kept foremost in my thinking. As a researcher I strove to develop relationships that would allow for a rich sharing of personal experience. At all times I was sensitive to my role in the selection, placement and interpretation of shared stories and the construction of meaning. Rossman and Rallis (1998) observe, "the researcher interprets the world [she] has entered. Field notes and snippets of interview transcripts do not speak for themselves; they must be interpreted in ways that are thoughtful" (p. 132). My selection and interpretation of experiences, stories and snippets reflect my own interpretations but have been tempered and shaped by the review, reflection and responses of each participant. I hope they are interpretations that bear the thumbprints of both myself and the participants as fellow researchers.

I also hope there is a sense of the humbly offered invitation to participate in the narratives offered in these pages and that the experiences of those involved in the study resonate within the reader.

Sharing Stories: Beginning an Ongoing Conversation

Sharing and exploring life stories is foundational to narrative inquiry and provided the type of methodology best suited to addressing the research question that set the direction for this study. Working within this context, my task, as researcher, was to create inquiry spaces—safe spaces—where lived experiences were valued, reflected upon, revisited, questioned and reimagined always keeping in mind that it is, "[b]y talking and listening, we produce a narrative together" (Riessman, 1993, p. 10). It was this aspect of collaboration and co-construction that promised a process I felt best suited my intended work. It did, however, demand a commitment to developing trusting relationships, to active listening, reflective thinking, care and concern as well as mutual sharing and engagement. The goal throughout was to gain insight and a deeper understanding of the personal, practical and professional experiences of four principals and the role mentorship had played within these experiences.

Ellis (1998) speaks of "openness and humility" and I entered into the research process acknowledging these feelings and being aware of my indebtedness to my participants for sharing their time and stories with me. Smith (1994) struck a chord when he explained that understanding is achieved when one opens oneself to the "conversation of life" (p. 172). In this research study I was seeking exactly the type of personal and intimate experience that would allow me to work closely with my participants, one which would offer such a conversation as we came to understand, together, our lived experiences.

One of the strengths I tried to bring to the research moment was the ability to develop relationships that would support reflection and genuine exploration of personal experiences, specifically in the area of study. The promise of narrative inquiry is that it offers a richness of description and understanding which can only be fully achieved if there is depth and breadth of sharing between and among individuals. But, to fulfill this promise, I knew that I would have to attend to the stories offered and I would have to be open to that which was said but also that which was left unsaid, "to go in directions not thought and to answer questions not asked" (Feldman, 1999, p.133).

Feldman (1999) first drew my attention to collaborative conversations as one way to focus on stories related to practice and leading to the "enhance(ment) [of our] individual and collective knowledge and understanding about teaching and educational situations," (p. 129). To provide the type of insight and enhancement of knowledge and understanding that he describes, conversations must, (i) occur between or among people; (ii) be a cooperative venture; (iii) have direction; (iv) result in new understanding; and (v) not be guided by the clock" (p. 130). However, while Feldman (1999) views conversation as a methodology designed to collect, analyze and make meaning of data, I was ever mindful of the insight provided by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) when they advise that, for the narrative inquirer, conversation is but one kind of field text used to develop the rich description needed to understand participants' experiences. That which is "normally called data [is] for us better thought of as field text. We call them field texts because they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience" (p. 92). Hence, while Feldman's (1999) criteria provided some guidance to my work, it was not as a methodology but rather as one call to develop collaborative conversations, over time, which would, in turn, help to create and enhance my field text. With this goal in mind, I took careful note of the descriptors provided by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who explain that conversations offer "face-to-face encounters" (p. 108) and are "marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow participants to establish forms and topics appropriate to their…inquiry… [T]here is probing in conversation, in-depth probing but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience described by the other" (p. 109). Hollingsworth (1994) supports the notion of collaborative conversations indicating that a transformation occurs as individuals engage in a collaborative research process that honors knowledge "as relational, as personal, as practical, as constructed, as reconstructed and as open to other interpretations" (p. 233).

The value of collaborative conversations is further reinforced by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) who advise, "that the possibility for reflective awakenings and transformations are limited when one is alone. [We] need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold and relived in new ways" (p. 13). Reissman (1993) concurs and notes, "Conversations offer a space for both participants—teller and listener/questioner—to develop meaning together in an evolving conversation" (p. 55). This meaning is created as individuals verbalize their experiences, telling, retelling and reimagining their stories, and the ongoing conversation helps to move these meanings forward (Diaz, 2002).

Ultimately,

> Conversation has been particularly attractive, both because of its richness and because it is a friendly and natural form of intercourse which allows for the easy exchange of experiences…Doing research in a conversational mode changes the relationship between persons who have been hitherto labeled as "researcher" and "practitioner." While it is unlikely to abolish the distinctions between them, conversational research does offer the possibility of developing a community of cooperative investigation into significant educational questions. This alone will contribute to the breaking down of rigid instrumentalist notions which separate the job of teaching from the activity of research. (Carson, 1986, p. 81)

Given the purpose of this study, the intended methodology and the relational quality I wished to establish between myself as researcher and my participants, a conversational approach to developing the field text seemed appropriate.

Enriching the Field Text

"Field texts assist memory to fill in the richness, nuance and intricacy of the lived stories and the landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 79). Transcriptions of the shared conversations with my participants helped to create the field text for this study which was enhanced and enriched by the field notes and personal journaling completed directly after each meeting and throughout the research period. The field notes were carefully detailed to ensure "a flood of descriptively oriented field experience observations….a mixture of you and me, the participant and researcher. These records, descriptively made to record events, happenings, attitudes and feelings, freeze specific moments in the narrative inquiry space" (pp. 82). They included my observations and responses to the meetings and experiences I shared with each participant. They also endeavored to fill in those blanks that were left as a result of audio taping, enriching the text with my thoughts about what was said as well as that which was not said, the context of our meetings and any other details related to our interactions.

In addition, through journaling, I was able to maintain a record of my own "experience of the experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 87) and, through these personal reflections add an inward turn to the outward view of my field notes. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution, "doing narrative inquiry is a form of living" (p. 89) and, as such, demands that the researcher is alert to the fullness of the experience. "The inquiry space, and the ambiguity implied, reminds us to be aware of where we and our participants are placed at any particular moment--temporally, spatially and in terms of the personal and the social" (p. 89).

By working towards a richness and diversity in the field text I hoped to be able to, "move back and forth between records of the experience under study and records of [myself] as researcher experiencing the experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 87).

Field Text to Research Text

Selecting and crafting stories for inclusion in the research text took considerable time and reflection, reading and rereading stories, examining field notes, personal journals and collected artifacts. Trying to bring greater clarity and new possibilities to the role of mentoring in the lives of school principals while honouring the voices of those who participated in the study required great care and thoughtful consideration. "Positioning field texts within the inquiry space, we open up questions of analysis" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131) which challenged me to identify emerging and recurring themes or threads and to contemplate moments of "insight." Bateson (1994) refers to this as "that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (p. 14).

The evolving research text always led to further wonderings and areas for consideration which seemed to grow exponentially and I brought these to my conversations with participants as we worked together to understand their storied experiences in a meaningful way. As if afraid of assuming too much authority I was always cautious in the selection of stories and in identifying recurring themes and threads, being sure to check understandings with my participants. Yet, over time, as I lived with and experienced the texts, certain stories and threads seemed to bubble to the surface, demanding a voice, clamoring for inclusion in the final draft. As each participant read his/her chapter, examining the pieces I had included, the patterns formed and the threads highlighted, our voices came together acknowledging, "This is my story; this is our story; this is the story for now."

Intertwining Voices Construct the Research Text

In order to appreciate the fullness of the research text, it is important for the reader to be aware of the structure of the dissertation. The author has utilized three differing fonts in a deliberate attempt to reflect the intertwined voices that have contributed to the final text.

The stories and experiences of each participant are offered in his/her own words as they were transcribed from our taped conversations and have been written in **bold font** in an attempt to visually emphasize the voice, experience and stories of each person and to heighten their individual and collective roles in the research process and the completed dissertation. Each participant received a draft copy of his/her chapter and was provided the opportunity to reflect upon, revisit and respond to his/her story. All suggestions were incorporated in the final text. Thus, the bolded sections reinforce the participant's voice in our shared conversations, our evolving relationship and the final dissertation. My own experiences and stories as participant and co-inquirer are also presented in bold font. However, my wonderings and personal reflections (the inward turn) as well as any additional readings/quotes I selected in order to probe further in my thinking, (as documented in my journal and field notes) appear in *italics*. The intention in using these two fonts (**bold** and *italics*) is to identify myself as both participant (**bold**) and reflective researcher (*italics*) with stories to relate as well as personal observations and wonderings to share. The regular text is used to connect the stories and wonderings and to discuss relevant literary references.

Therefore, the changing fonts have been used in an attempt to highlight the intertwining threads and voices that have come together to form the final research text, a shared understanding of this present moment in time as it has been shaped by the recollections of the past and imaginings of the future, found in the stories of four principals and the researcher.

Establishing Trustworthiness

It was never the intention of this study to provide generalizations with regards to the influence of mentoring in the lives of school principals but rather, to offer the reader the richness, depth and complexity of the narratives of personal experiences. In fact, Conle (2000) advises that there is no one truth that the researcher can or must find and report on and "there is no past that, if discovered, completely determines the results of the inquiry" (p. 192). However, as a researcher I am mindful of how others may examine and judge the work and the expectations some readers have of how "good research" should be constructed. I have felt the tension that results when one is faced by comments such as, "Surely a dissertation should be more than just a story?" as if there must be a set of generalizable themes applicable to the larger population and perhaps a theory or two to add to the research base. As I struggled with this dilemma, I found direction in the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985); Clandinin and Connelly (2000); Mulholland and Wallace, 2003).

In discussing what they refer to as "naturalistic studies" or nonexperimental work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a specific set of standards for determining the soundness of the research. In referring to the overall quality of the work they utilize the term, "trustworthiness" and write, "The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences…that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?" (p. 290).

In considering the trustworthiness of a particular piece of qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) continue by suggesting four general criteria for consideration: i) credibility; ii) transferability; iii) dependability; and iv) confirmability and it is these criteria among others that were used to guide the work of this research study.

Credibility

The notion of credibility refers to the researcher's interpretations of the data and whether these are credible to the participants who provided the data. In adhering to this requirement the researcher has a responsibility to ensure that his/her reconstruction and representation of the participants' views of their experiences "fits" or is recognizable to the participants. "A qualitative study may be deemed 'credible' when it presents such faithful descriptions or interpretations of a human experience that the people having that experience would immediately recognize it from those descriptions or interpretations as their own" (Sandelowshi, 1986, p. 30).

In order to increase the credibility of this study I worked with each of the participants over a six-month period, gathering together a variety of data sources (including conversation transcripts, artifacts and field notes), reviewing, examining and considering these from many different perspectives; continually refining my working assertions, reflecting on common threads and resonating stories and bringing these back to the participants for further reflection and discussion.

Throughout the six-month duration of the study all conversations were taped and transcribed then shared with the participant(s). These provided the groundwork for further conversations as we talked together making sense of stories and developing shared meaning. Finally, the draft chapters were provided to each participant who was then invited to review, refine, add, delete and/or clarify any aspects they deemed necessary. A few very minor revisions were requested and these were accommodated.

Transferability

Transferability asks the researcher to clearly and comprehensively describe the conditions under which the study was conducted and to provide sufficient information about that which has been studied so that the reader may determine for him/herself whether the research findings are adequately similar. In this way he/she can ascertain if transfer to another context is possible and reasonable. Morse and Field (1995) refer to transferability as "the criterion used to determine whether the findings can be applied in other contexts, settings or with other groups" (p. 143). In order to assist with this process

Guba and Lincoln (1994) contend, "the researcher is obligated to provide the data base or thick descriptions necessary to make judgments about application possible" (p. 298).

In this present study the researcher provides the type of thick description, gathered from a number of sources, that can serve to provide the reader with a comprehensive, clear and rich view of the context and experiences of the participants and the process undertaken to gather, synthesize and analyze the data. It is hoped that this will allow the reader to determine the level of transferability or applicability to other contexts.

Dependability and Confirmability

In enhancing the trustworthiness of a research study the inquirer also seeks to attend to the criteria of dependability and confirmability. In terms of the former, it is inherent on the researcher to ensure that the research process makes sense and is well documented. In other words, a description of the emerging nature of the research process can assist the reader in assessing the dependability of the work. While some may insist that, in order to ensure dependability the study must be replicable, it is important to keep in mind the uniqueness of the human experience. Therefore, it may be more reasonable to ensure that the process has been clearly and completely documented with sufficient detail and depth of description to allow the reader an inside view of the process and the researcher's experience of the experience.

With regards to confirmability, links between the data or field text and the associated understandings, co-constructed by the researcher and the participants and shared in the research text, should be clearly described. In this way, the reader can begin to appreciate how the interpretations are nested within a particular context and are related to the individuals' experiences and their present understandings of those experiences rather than simply being constructions of the researcher's own making.

Throughout the research process, I have endeavoured to ensure a transparency and detailing that would allow the reader to ascertain the dependability and confirmability of the work undertaken and the transcripts, field notes, journals, summaries, draft dissertation copies, participant e-mails and feedback have been maintained for reference as necessary. Ultimately, however, "...the idea [is] that legitimate qualitative work is *shared* with others who, through reading, experience vicariously events and phenomena described" (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003, p. 8) and consider the findings as worthy of attention and of taking account. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to this as the "Who cares" and "So what?" of the work and encourage the researcher to reflect seriously on questions related to justification such as: "How do we know that our inquiry interest is anything more than personal or anything more than trivial? How do we know that anyone will be interested? Will our inquiry make a difference?" (p. 120). These questions and considerations have played a dominant role throughout the research process and it is hoped that the reader will find the resulting text worth paying attention to.

Authenticity

In addition to trustworthiness, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) encourage the narrative researcher to contemplate aspects of authenticity in determining or judging the "goodness" of the inquiry. Of primary importance is a commitment to gathering and representing respondent's experiences in a balanced, even-handed way. Throughout this study I sought to gather, respond to and represent the participant's stories in a respectful, considered and sensitive fashion. Their input on the stories selected for inclusion in the final dissertation was actively solicited and included. As well, participants' experiences, insights and reimaginings are woven throughout the written text in order to highlight their individual and collective voices. This style was utilized primarily to acknowledge and reinforce the role participants assumed as co-collaborators through the research process. However, it is also hoped that the,

> style of writing draws the reader so closely into subjects' worlds that these can be palpably felt. When such written accounts contain a high degree of internal coherence, plausibility and correspond to what readers recognize from their own experience and from other realistic and factual texts, they accord the work (and the research on which it is based) a sense of authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 381).

In addition, authenticity can be enhanced by adherence to various other guidelines suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989): (i) the extent to which the participants' involvement in the inquiry helped to inform, deepen and enrich their constructions; (ii) whether they developed greater understanding and appreciation of the constructions of others; (iii) the extent to which the inquiry stimulated and facilitated action; and (iv) whether participants were empowered to act.

With regards to these latter criteria, participants demonstrated their evolving understanding of mentorship as they told and retold of their experiences and reimagined possibilities for themselves and others within the context of a professional and personal life. As they became increasingly involved in the research process and in the construction of the field and research texts, their stories became richer and more detailed, one triggering another, always digging more deeply into their experience of school leadership and mentoring (i). All four expressed an interest in the final work and the experiences and understandings of colleagues whom they had not met but who were engaged in the same research process (ii). At the completion of my doctoral program, participants will be provided with final copies of the dissertation so they may re-read their own stories and gain a greater sense of each one as it has been laid alongside the others to form the completed work. It is difficult for the researcher to speculate on the "growth" and potential "empowerment to act" that was brought to bear on the participants as a result of their involvement in the research process however, there has been significant learning on behalf of the researcher and a number of opportunities to enact some of this learning both personally and professionally and these are documented throughout the work (iii; iv).

Eisner (1991) also refers to the notion of authenticity and suggests that the real test of a study is whether or not it contributes to the improvement of education. With this in mind and in adhering to the criteria noted above, it is hoped that the work will be judged as trustworthy and authentic and that its usefulness will be evidenced by the reader coming to a greater understanding of the lives and stories that have composed this research study. Finally it is hoped that this study and the stories of the participants will resonant with other practitioners and in doing so will contribute positively to mentorship in particular and the educational process in general. They have definitely helped to inform and enhance my own practice as a system leader by encouraging me to reflect on the multifaceted potential of mentorship and by providing me with stories, experiences and new understandings that will help to guide and shape the contributions I make to my school district's work in the area of administrative mentorship. Finally, I have come to value the voices of others and to understand the need for sharing of stories and experiences in ongoing, collaborative conversations..

Terms

"The words in every day language are rich in multiple meanings" (Creswell, 1998, p. 106). In this study, participants had many understandings of the term "mentoring." Some general descriptors were offered in the initial pages of this dissertation however these were provided as a starting point for myself as the researcher and for the reader. Through the stories of each participant my understanding grew in complexity, depth, richness and possibility and it is my hope that this will also be the case for the reader as he/she reflects on the storied lives presented in this text.

However, in a further effort to provide some of the basic and evolving terminology regarding mentorship and available in the current literature, the following definitions are offered:

Traditional Mentoring: a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work. A mentor supports, guides and counsels the young adult as he or she accomplishes this important task (Kram, 1985, p. 2). (Also referred to as Classical Mentoring, Kram, 1985 or, within the work of Mullen, 2005, Technical Mentoring)

Formal Mentorship: an institutionalized mentor-protégé arrangement based on assignment to the relationship through one-on-one, group, and cohort formats (Mullen, 2005, p. 21)

Informal Mentoring: a mentor-protégé arrangement that is spontaneous and self-directed, not managed, structured, or officially recognized (Mullen, 2005, p. 21)

Mentorship: an educational process focused on teaching and learning within dyads, groups and cultures (Mullen, 2005, p. 25)

Technical Mentoring: hierarchically transmitting authoritative knowledge within organizational and relational systems (Mullen, 2005, p. 8)

Alternative Mentoring: engaging in shared learning, inquiry and power across status, racial, gender, and other differences, with a vision of empowerment and equality (Mullen, 2005, p. 8)

Co Mentorship: individuals or groups proactively engage in reciprocal teaching and learning and transform power structures to honor egalitarianism (Mullen, 2005, p. 25)

Lifelong Mentoring: continually seeking, finding, and reconstructing mentoring and co mentoring relationships (Mullen, 2005, p. 25)

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines established by the University of Alberta governing the use of human participants in research were followed in this study. Permission to conduct the research was requested from the Ethics Committee and Faculty of Secondary Education, University of Alberta. Consent was obtained from the school boards with staff members participating in the study.

All participants in the research study were informed in writing of the nature and purpose of the project prior to the commencement of the study. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All participants were requested to complete consent forms prior to data gathering.

The identity of all participants has been protected and confidentiality was assured during the gathering and reporting of the data and pseudonyms have been used to refer to principals and their schools. Anonymity of participants was further guaranteed by allowing them to review and amend transcribed interview comments prior to inclusion in the dissertation. With the support of my faculty advisor, I was available at all times to address any issues or concerns arising from the research. All data collected was stored in a secure location in the researcher's office during the study and will be maintained for a five-year period after the conclusion of the study. After that time, the data will be destroyed.

Chapter 4

Michele's Story

Anyone who imagines that all fruits ripen at the same time as the strawberries knows nothing about grapes. (Paracelsus)

A Reflection

> *In 1993 I celebrated the completion of my Masters' thesis and, as I looked back on that accomplishment some 10 years later, I realized I did not remember much of the research experience; the participants of the study were non-entities to me and the findings were simply the content I needed to finish the work. As a quantitative study it "emphasize[d] the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4) but failed to establish any personal meaning or generate a transformation of understanding for me, as the researcher. The presence of that red covered text on my bookshelf served to remind me that I still needed and wanted to engage in a learning experience that promised "an intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4), one which would provide me with an opportunity to work collaboratively as a co-researcher with others and, in doing so, would lead me to a new place of understanding. (This dissertation, p. 16)*

When I first wrote these words more than two years ago for my research proposal, they captured the essence of my experience during the completion of my Master's degree and my commitment to engage in a more personal and connected

process throughout my doctoral program. Little did I know then, the journey I was embarking upon, the ways in which I would come to view learning and knowledge, or the questions with which I would grapple.

Being With Myself: Where Does This Story Begin?

How does one begin? The mountain of transcripts, field notes, journal entries, dog-eared books and reams of paper covered with starts, notations, thoughts and literary references is overwhelming. How can I possibly do justice to my participants' stories? Will they feel I've wasted their time; failed to capture "their story"; come to a thin and superficial understanding of their experiences...or worse, the 'wrong' understanding? As I've transcribed I've cursed myself—a non-typist—for taking on this task and yet I find myself nodding, stopping the tape and rewinding for a bit that resonates within me or leaves me with yet more questions. At times I laugh out loud or shake my head, engaged in reliving the shared conversations. I'm trying to understand but there are always many more questions. How will I know when this research is complete? Will it ever be complete when I'm too paralyzed with fear to begin!?

I have come to respect each of my participants and to value the hours we've spent. I can't imagine the time when we are not sitting together and talking. I want to know what is happening next in their lives. I often think, "It's like that when I put a novel aside and 'get on with the day-to-day tasks that fill my life'. I frequently find myself wondering what the novel's characters are doing while I am too busy to be reading their story!" These are not simply four participants; they are now 'real' people, living 'real' lives and I am sad to say good-bye to them and our time together.

What am I to do with all these words? I read and reread looking for the stories and the threads. I start—"I must be brilliant; this is great stuff I am creating!…… I highlight it all and press 'delete' on the keyboard. It was superficial, thin, uni-dimensional; it just didn't capture the lived experience of this individual as I have come to understand him/her". I pull out another tiny piece from the transcript and find myself reflecting, wondering. I carry this bit with me for a while; I return to the transcripts again, my field notes and my journal writing and finally I think I am beginning to understand what Maureen may have meant…what Sean's intention may have been…how Tom experienced this or that. I lay this piece alongside another and feel a shape beginning to come together. I wonder how Steve will respond when he reads this excerpt.

I begin to realize that I have grown up "thinking of authorities not friends, as sources of truth…[and, as such, I have been one of] those who think of knowledge as received rather than constructed, assume[ing] that the authorities can dispense only one right answer for each problem" (Mader, in Birren et al., 1996, p. 40). It is such hard work to construct knowledge, to seek understanding; but it is also freeing, encouraging and meaningful. I think this is the type of learning experience I have craved; I just didn't realize it would be so tough, so demanding, so messy. So scary!

A Starting Place

I flip through the pages of my journal to locate the exact starting place for my own story but as I visit and revisit each entry I become increasingly aware that there is no one, true, and definitive beginning. Each story, every snippet and thought, even the "little scraps and nothingness" (Carr, cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104) *contribute in differing ways as I reflect, retell and reimagine. I take some heart from Kenyon (in Birren et al., 1996) who shares, "Lifestories are a storehouse of experiences and become very important because in one sense, the past exists only as it is remembered and created and recreated in the interaction with present and future experiences and the meaning, interpretations and metaphors ascribed to those experiences" (p. 30). Today, my story of mentorship, that which I, as a teacher, educational leader and researcher, bring to my work, this study and my relationships with Tom; Sean; Steve and Maureen, begins with Mrs. Murphy.*

A Defining Experience: Negative Mentorship

My family always said I was born to be a teacher. From an early age, I would set up my neighbourhood summer school in our back garden and round up all the local children, Monday to Friday, July and August, for their daily lessons and activities. I used my saved pocket money to purchase "teaching supplies" and ensured my students were well cared for and properly instructed in such basics as reading, writing and arithmetic. I ran a "tight ship" but the parents of my students were very supportive of all my efforts and cooperative in every way! As I look back with much wiser eyes, I'm sure they were simply delighted with the opportunity to have their children gainfully occupied and out of harm's way during those long summer months!

When I turned 15, I progressed from my backyard schoolhouse to being a camp counsellor. Endless summers, spent in the company of children, playing games, tackling summer sports, messing about with craft projects and embarking

on fieldtrips solidified my commitment to becoming an educator. This was truly the path I was meant to take and I was sure I could become the type of teacher who would make a positive difference in the lives of kids.

I certainly knew the type of teaching style I did not want to have. Unlike many of my own teachers, I would not be one who stood at the front of the class lecturing, playing favorites with some and marginalizing others. I dreamed of classes that were lively and engaging and of becoming a teacher who understood that each child learned differently and who made an effort to reach out to each one. In many ways it was Mrs. Murphy who finally and forever became the embodiment of all that I would never be. She taught me English and also served as the girls' Guidance Counsellor, a role model and confidante for the young women in the school. I remember her as a formidable presence and, to my adolescent eyes, she appeared to be ancient! She possessed a withering look that could end an illicit or mischievous thought long before it had time to take root.

I dutifully attended her regular, mandatory appointments designed to discuss academic progress, engage in career planning discussions and generally chat about personal issues. However, she was certainly not the type of person with whom I would ever share my passionate plans for the future. I did, though, complete all the requisite forms and career planners ensuring every answer pointed towards "teacher." During our final meeting Mrs. Murphy was quite clear. She knew me well, she indicated, and was quite certain teaching was not meant for me. "In fact, Michele, I don't think you'd make a good teacher at all. You don't like to follow the rules and you're too headstrong. You like to do things your own way, you question

too often and you just don't fit the mold of a teacher." This was a defining moment in our 'relationship' as well as an unforgettable experience in my life and, over the years, I have tried to make sense of the meaning and impact for myself. Despite the negative way in which I first heard her words, Mrs. Murphy has played an interesting role throughout my journey in education. Immediately I was fueled with a desire to become, not just a teacher, but the kind of teacher Mrs. Murphy was not. I would always hold in my mind the power of teachers to encourage and support their students in aspiring to and achieving a dream. I would not forget the power of words and the importance of even a brief comment or conversation. Each time I have accomplished something new, completed a further degree or made a positive difference in the life of a student or colleague, I have thought of Mrs. Murphy and silently thanked her for the contribution she made to clarifying and affirming my life's purpose. Dewey (1938) suggests that, when we view troubling, difficult and tension-filled experiences as educative rather than miseducative there is promise for meaningful growth. As I reflect today, I realize my story embraces the multiplicity of my experiences—both positive and negative and is positioned within and upon the multiple landscapes of my life. It is here I have composed that life and it is who I am, in all its complexity, that I bring to this research process (Bateson, 1989; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Mullen et al., 1997).

I would not call Mrs. Murphy a mentor; she certainly did not advance my career nor did she nurture, protect, teach or even coach me. We did not share a trusting, personal relationship but she did gave me the incentive to move forward in a very specific and committed way and she has influenced my teaching and leading practice more than she or

I could ever have imagined. She also, almost assuredly, influenced my interest in mentorship and my belief in the power of relationships to destroy but also to nurture and support personal and professional growth and, over the years, I have been intrigued with the role relationship plays within the educational context.

Mrs. Murphy may represent a negative mentoring experience (Mullen et al., 1997) but there were others who helped to cultivate a more positive landscape from which I could grow as an educator and eventually as an educational leader.

Experiencing Positive Mentorship

As I reflect on the many experiences and challenges I have encountered as a teacher and administrator, I am reminded of the feelings I had when, in 1975, after only a year in the classroom, I moved from Montreal to Edmonton, Alberta—a new province, a new city with a decidedly different culture, a new home and a new school. My principal was encouraging and supportive and I was determined to find a place on the youthful, fun-loving and committed staff. Almost immediately I was invited to participate in a wide range of professional and social activities and I quickly experienced a sense of belonging I had not felt before in the school context as either a student or a beginning teacher. Over the months, I gravitated towards Francis, another Language Arts teacher. She was knowledgeable and creative and her teaching practice was one I aspired to. Only slightly older than I, she seemed to exude a confidence and style I wanted to achieve for myself. We spent many hours planning our shared teaching units, discussing strategies, commiserating over this student issue or that and devising exciting and innovative activities to engage even

the most resistant student. When I directed the school plays, she sewed the costumes and, when the curling season began, she and her team invited me to join them. I was part of a community that supported and challenged me as both a professional and an individual. Whether I was immersed in an examination of my own teaching practice, struggling with a particular student or seeking a sense of camaraderie, Francis, among others, provided me with a safe place to ask my own questions, try new possibilities and garner the feedback and support I needed to develop into the teacher I wanted to be.

Over the years, there were to be many changes—helping to open a new school; a move to northern Alberta; a detour through two international schools and finally a return to St. Albert. As an experienced teacher, I quickly came to think that I should know how to handle even the most unfamiliar of situations. To ask for help seemed to suggest a level of incompetence or a weakness. I believed I should be able to demonstrate the highest level of ability, skill and knowledge in an independent and maintenance-free fashion. Younger teachers would approach me with their questions and student teachers had numerous concerns and queries, all of which required self-assured and knowledgeable responses. It seemed as an experienced teacher, I should "know the ropes" no matter how those ropes looked! I expected this of myself and of the other experienced teachers with whom I interacted.

As I look back, I begin to understand the implied pressure this must have placed on them and on me and I wonder how much of the isolation present in schools has been, to some degree, self-imposed. When I recollect the educative

experiences I shared with Francis, to work in relationship with a trusted and valued colleague, the opportunities to reflect on my practice and the opportunities to come to a greater understanding of myself as a teacher I realize how powerful such interactions can be. DuFour and Eaker (1998) speak of collaborative environments as "the 'single most important factor' for successful school improvement initiatives and the 'first order of business' for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their school (p. 117). They go on to suggest that, when teachers focus on issues directly related to teaching and learning, only then can the true benefits of collaboration be realized. My relationship with Francis and the other colleagues who joined us along the way served to strengthen my practice as a teacher and played a mentoring role that was pivotal to my development both professionally and personally.

There was to be, however, another transition which for me reaffirmed the power of mentorship to encourage, challenge, strengthen, support, reaffirm, rejuvenate and renew even the most self-sufficient and competent of individuals.

The Path to Leadership

For me, working alongside Peter was one of those fortuitous occurrences that help to shape a career and a professional life. During the years when our offices were side by side, I would not have called him my mentor, for the word did not have the same illustrious connotations it does now. Peter was simply a great principal and a good person. We had a special bond and worked together like the warp and weft of a strong piece of cloth. With his encouragement and support I entered school

administration. He suggested I apply for the assistant principalship in his school and, as a member of the interview panel, supported my appointment. In doing so, he introduced me to the world of formal leadership.

Through the years of our partnership, I learned a great deal about administering a school and about myself as a leader. Peter always supported me although I am sure he didn't always agree with me! He actively encouraged me to follow my own convictions, was willing to teach me what I wanted to know and supported the decisions I made.

> On one occasion a somewhat crusty and outspoken principal from the nearby elementary school called and challenged me on a special education application for one of his students. As the administrator most responsible for special needs programming in the school I had denied the application and indicated the student didn't qualify for the program.
>
> "I don't care if the child qualifies or not; he's going in that program. Either you take him or I'll call Peter. Have it your way but the student's in!"
>
> I heard nothing more about the situation until several days later when I asked Peter if he had received a call from Lyle; perhaps he should expect some fall-out from a rather heated debate we had had!
>
> "Of course I heard from him, Michele. He called directly after the two of you hung up. I told him you were in charge; if he couldn't persuade you then he was out of luck. This is your area Michele; I trust you to make the right decisions." No more was said but the effects on my confidence as an administrator and the reaffirmation of my skills were profound. As well, I learned a great deal about how leaders' interactions can affect those with whom he/she works.

It was in these day-to-day occurrences and the opportunities for dialogue, practice and reflection as well as his genuine acceptance of me as a valued colleague,

that I found meaningful and practical mentorship. Peter provided me the freedom and confidence to make my own decisions and to accept the consequences. I knew he trusted me and I trusted him. As a result, our relationship infused me with hope and courage. His open and non-judgmental manner offered me a place to sort out my own thoughts, to confront feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability and to seek clarity and direction. And, in some ways, I believe there was a sense of reciprocity to our relationship. He would always say, "I look good because I surround myself with great people!" We challenged one another and my success, to some degree, is also his success as he sees those with whom he has worked advance and make positive contributions to the educational system he so dearly cherishes.

A number of years later, I continue to be cared for; my well being as a person and a colleague are of concern and my growth is promoted and supported. Feeling valued and respected in these ways helps to establish the kind of trust and rapport that facilitates open discussion, collaborative inquiry and personal and professional reflection (Noddings, 1984). Although Peter and I no longer work together, I know I can still turn to him for advice and input when I need a sounding board or someone I trust to help me reflect on issues that are troubling or challenging me. He will always be an important part of a mentoring mosaic that continues to expand and, in doing so, enrich my work as well as my faith and confidence in myself as an educator and leader.

My Network Grows

As I have continued my journaling, I have come to realize that my stories of mentorship are layered and reflected throughout the many experiences I have had over the years. They are stories of apprenticeship, transitions and ongoing growth. There are significant others and there are those who simply joined me along the path as fellow practitioners. I have come to view these as stories of both traditional and co-mentoring. Entering into the research process has helped me to discover the multiple experiences that have shaped my existence as an educator and my view of myself as a leader. I acknowledge each of these stories is "composed of innumerable bundles of other stories" (Silko, 1996, p. 31) however those I have teased out and offer here represent for me, at this time, the mentoring experiences that have had the greatest impact on my personal and professional growth. They have also helped me to locate myself within the research as I seek to better understand, and make meaning of, principals' narrative accounts of mentorship.

Recently my son asked if his grandmother saw herself from the inside as we did from the outside—did she think of herself as being as old as we thought of her? I was struck by the question as I have had similar wonderings myself in other circumstances. In my professional world, looking from the outside, I am an Associate Superintendent of Schools but, to myself, on the inside, I am still a classroom teacher of fun-loving junior-senior high students. There are moments when I think that I will surely wake up and find it has all been a dream! How did I find my way to this place? Good, caring people have seen potential and have challenged and nurtured me, helping me to increase my knowledge, to build my skills, to gain in confidence and assuredness and achieve success as an educator.

David is one of these people—a true teacher himself, one who cares about students and his colleagues and one who takes the time to mentor others. He is a wise *and experienced 'elder' and a valued resource and colleague. I am curious to know if he also has days when he wonders how he got here, to the Superintendency; when he thinks of himself as a somewhat crazy yet devoted classroom teacher?*

It was never my goal to work in a central office position, to be away from the energy and excitement found in schools. A suggestion from a former Superintendent found me there for a two-year stint with a promise of a return to school based administration.

My introduction to District Office occurred at the same time as David began his tenure as Superintendent, in September 2000. Approachable, knowledgeable and caring are key in describing this senior leader. He listened and encouraged me to assume tasks and responsibilities that interested and challenged me. When, a year and half later, a new Associate Superintendency opened, he suggested I apply. In the short time I had been at District Office, I felt I had grown as an educator and leader but was this something I was ready for; that I wanted? David had helped me to realize there are many ways in which we can impact the learning experience of students. He had helped me to see that sometimes committed and passionate teachers are called to assume leadership roles outside of the school context, their mission to support and protect the integrity of the teaching and learning environment in the classroom.

Directly and indirectly he had nurtured my learning process by sharing his knowledge, gained from years of experience; by reflecting with me on my practice—my doubts, concerns and successes; by challenging me to try new things; and by actively encouraging me to return to university as a doctoral student. From David I

have felt the unconditional support and positive regard that helped me begin to attain the skills and confidence I needed to be effective and to feel assured and focused as I moved to a new position on the educational landscape.

As with many of my colleagues in education, I acknowledge the value of developmental and collaborative relationships and I continue to seek opportunities for personal mentorship and collegial co-mentorship. My job is not always easy and my skills are constantly challenged. I work on district committees supporting mentorship programs for beginning teachers and school-based administrators and I am aware of the commitment, provincially, in this area. I read articles and order books focused on programming for these groups and I wonder when we will begin to direct our gaze on central office administrators and the possibilities for mentorship at this level. I too share the feelings I hear expressed by beginning and experienced teachers and administrators—isolation; a desire for ongoing collaboration; the need for support, a place to vent and rejoice; a desire for advice, guidance and friendship. Through this I am starting to realize, no matter the level or positioning of one's job in education, we are all faced with similar struggles, questions and the desire to work relationally and to continue the learning journey.

My Past Continues to Inform My Present

At the outset of my own writing in class and in my research journal, Mrs. Murphy provided a starting point for my story of mentorship. In juxtaposition to those who nurture, support, guide and befriend, she attempted to deny and destroy. Confident that she knew the qualities of a "good" teacher, the appropriate ways of being and knowing within the educational system, she negated my burning desire to become a different type of educator, one who valued relationships with students in a way that I perceived to be more authentic and accepting than that which I had witnessed or experienced from her or from the countless others who were no more than passing figures standing at the front of the various classrooms I inhabited as a student.

My ongoing reflections throughout this research journey have led me to consider the relationships I have been part of and the relational needs I have as a person and as an educator. This has not been an easy task and yet my professor asks for more, "Always more Michele," and I have struggled to share more. I began by thinking the work would be just about mentorship but I have come to realize that it is about so much more and I have used my journal as a place to explore my own story, those jottings, wonderings, snippets and stories that have helped me to locate myself within the inquiry space and to "position [my]self 'in the midst'" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 100). As I read and re-read my journal entries I discover that living and working relationally is an ongoing need and desire. I am aware of a thread that runs throughout my own life story and I see it deeply rooted within my early experiences with my grandfather. It is not surprising then, that in having this discussion with one of my professors she points to his picture and I begin to understand…

My story of mentorship may have begun with Mrs. Murphy but my story of relationship begins with my grandfather. He lived with my grandmother in the 15th Arrondissement of Paris in a lovely apartment with 12-foot ceilings and a view of the Eiffel Tower, the same apartment in which my father had grown up. He used to tell us of the days during World War II when Nazi officers occupied this same flat

and how the studs on the backs of their jackets had made the scratchings that we now saw as markings on the backs of his dining room chairs! He was a master storyteller and, despite my age, whether a young child, "sophisticated" teenager or loving adult granddaughter, I was intrigued by his many life experiences and I would sit for hours and listen to his adventures. He always seemed to have an intuitive sense of how I was feeling and honored my questions and concerns as though they were issues of considerable weight requiring and deserving careful consideration and much deliberation. He frequently acted as an intermediary smoothing the path between my father and myself, pleading my case or offering sage advice and 'words of wisdom' designed to help me be successful in whatever I was undertaking. From a very young age he encouraged me in my dreams of becoming a teacher and was convinced I had much to share in what he thought of as an honorable profession.

When he visited my family in Montreal, he would take me out for 'tea and cakes,' playing the well-practiced game of reaching deeply into his pocket attempting to find just a few more pennies, enough to pay for the second piece of cake that would allow us to sit and talk a little longer. When I was somewhat older and visiting, he and my grandmother would host wonderful luncheons and afterwards they would share the stories and gossip surrounding each of their guests. Everyone seemed to have such an intriguing life and my grandfather and I would spend hours speculating about this one or that while my grandmother chimed in with interesting tid-bits!

This warm and trusting relationship was one I treasured, not only because I loved this man unconditionally and felt unconditionally loved and valued by him but also because our relationship provided me with a safe place to, "engage in conversation where stories [could] be told, reflected back in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 160). The opportunities I had to live relationally with my grandfather, in the safe places he provided, encouraged me to imagine myself at my best, my strongest, my most powerful and my most hopeful.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) refer to places that are safe and educative, those that offer a space where one can engage in storytelling, relationship and reflection. "As we examine these places it becomes evident that the telling of stories in such places of relationship goes beyond the mere telling of stories to their retelling and reliving…the stories told and retold in these safe places [can be] educative" (p. 161), leading to awakenings and transformations.

While Clandinin and Connelly (1995) place their discussion within the context of teachers and the educational system, I have come to see a similar thread within my relationship with my grandfather and those other special relationships I have valued: mutual regard and respect; trust; care; the sharing of stories and confidences; and opportunities to be the self I am and to imagine the self I want to become.

While I have tended to story myself both personally and professionally as a self-sufficient and independent person, through my reflections and my stories I have been reminded of my need and desire to be in relationship with others. *I wonder if* *this is what has drawn me to narrative inquiry and the topic of mentorship both of which are relational in their very nature. By examining mentorship perhaps I am looking for ways to legitimize and extend educative and supportive relationships between and among colleagues and, through narrative inquiry I am engaging in a process that invites participant and researcher to work collaboratively to make sense of experiences and how individuals come to compose their lives. In many ways my story of my grandfather serves to remind me of how my past continues to inform my present and, although I will never find the task easy, I am beginning to understand the reason for my professor's call to offer more, "always more." In her words and encouragement I am reminded of Jalonga's observation: "For individuals, stories act as a mirror—we learn about ourselves—but also as a window—a way of looking into the past, present and future experiences of others" (cited in McCormack, 2004, p. 233).*

"Always More, Michele"

I am just a few days from handing this final document in to my Examining Committee. It will be that dreaded moment when I must say, "This is my final draft for your review and consideration." There are no more of the excuses that automatically come when something is simply a 'work-in-progress.' I am sitting in the Sugar Bowl, a small diner where my husband and I come early each Sunday morning for breakfast and the chance to read and simply relax. There are only a few tables, the majority of which are generally occupied by the same cast of regulars: solitary men with the morning newspaper or a laptop in hand; several couples, each at varying ends of the parenting continuum (those with young children

always seem to be on their way to a run or some other healthy activity and those who have finished with that phase of their lives appear happy to finally have their meals to themselves, hot rather than lukewarm and limp. Along with this latter group, we smile pleasantly at those who are engaged in the game of arranging sugar packets in interesting designs on the wooden table tops or turning fruit skewers into mini-airplanes destined for a somewhat reluctant mouth). My particular favorites are the young mother and her three little girls, all of whom are regularly clothed in the most unusual assortment of skirts, crinolines, vests, corsets, stockings and boots, layered and topped with faux jewels and the occasional chain. I often pause to wonder what their home might look like, how their daily activities unfold, where they find this wonderful array of garments and how they put everything together like this on a Sunday morning!

We have been coming here for the past two years, my husband with his Buddhist books and I with my university writings and readings. We choose the same table, carefully selected to allow for the spreading that has occurred as our level of familiarity and comfort in this place has grown. Our favorite waitress instantly brings the tea and coffee that will offer the right start to the next two to three hour period and asks if we want 'the usual'. Both this place and this companion feel "right" to me and I find it easy to slip into my work. Dan is the kind of person who enjoys sharing in my university studies and he always makes the time to engage in considered albeit frequently intense discussion and debate about this idea or that, this quote or that, this piece of writing or that. He is intrigued with the notion of narrative inquiry and it seems almost synchronistic that many times his own reading mirrors something I am learning about or working on. He reads from his page and there is a connection that leads to a conversation about my research and perhaps education in general. A teacher too, Dan has a wealth of knowledge and experience but mostly he has a sharp and inquiring mind and he challenges me to think more deeply and more creatively.

The other day I was reading a piece that talked about how individuals make sense of their world, the author explaining "[sensemaking] is never solitary because what a person does internally is contingent on others…[and that] socialization is often the setting in which sensemaking is explored" (Weick, 1995, p. 40). I began to reflect on the other criteria that are, to me, so integral to this process—the trust, feeling cared for and respected, the shared experiences over time, and the context in which I am situated. Here, in this place, with this companion, in this moment, as with many others, I have the opportunity to make sense of myself as a learner and the experience in which I am engaged. Steve, one of my participants, once asked, somewhat reflectively, if one's spouse can function as a mentor and I am reminded of that question here in my own life experience. This is important relationship to me, both personally and professionally and, through my journaling, I am beginning to realize that my doctoral journey has been one of many educative relationships.

As part of a cohort group my fellow doctoral students and I progressed together throughout the first two years of part-time classes, sharing ideas, listening to possible proposals and research plans, communicating regularly through e-mail and the occasional dinner celebration. We have cheered each other on and tried to support those who found their stamina and focus faltering. Our professors have

engaged us in a process in which our knowledge and experiences have been respected. Our contributions have been actively sought out and reflected upon with considered thought and appreciation. For the first time in my career as a student I have felt myself connected to others and part of a true learning community. My original hope was to involve myself in a research process that would allow me to establish meaningful links with my participants; I did not realize that I would also develop these sorts of relationships with my classmates and my professors. And, to this, I have added Dan who, once the classes were completed and the writing began in earnest, has provided the relational support and the space for conversation and debate that has helped me to continue on.

One of the most challenging tasks throughout has been writing my own story. Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) refers to Doll (1995) and hooks (1994) and the relevance of their life stories in the work they were undertaking. I am immediately reminded of my professor's call for more, "always more" of the personal and I am drawn to this author's acknowledgement that,

> *what is being recounted is no longer the pat, insulated account of an isolated self: Each of these authors has searched for ways to present the self-in-relation...But they offer no formulas; how exactly to give voice to personal stories is a matter that has to be figured out "from scratch" each time. (p. 81)*

I don't know that I have 'figured it out' but, with the help of others, I am engaged in the process of making sense of the stories of mentoring and relationship I have brought to this work. Now, upon these last re-readings, before I must finally submit this document to my Examining Committee, I find myself with more questions, more stories I wish to explore—mine and others—evolving aspects of mentorship that continue to surface as I *engage in ongoing conversations with colleagues, rethinking and reimagining what is and what might be. Vinz (1997) speaks of unknowing as the task of "scratch[ing] at the marrow of understanding to discover a multiplicity of meanings" (p. 139) and indicates this is a healthy and necessary process in that it allows us to "see more and see differently" (p. 145). She is referring to our acts of teaching but also to how we story ourselves as teachers. She indicates that, in the telling and retelling of our stories, we can better situate our experiences and how they may or may not influence our actions and our thinking in the present moment. "The telling itself brings the experience into existence again and offers an opportunity to un-know the known" (p. 140). She cites Eiseley (1975) in explaining that a resulting shift from our own familiar and comfortable boundaries to a place where we "see more and see differently" is like a kaleidoscope: "Then some fine day, the kaleidoscope through which we peer at life shifts suddenly and everything is reordered. A blink at the right moment may do it, an eye applied to a crevice, or the world seen through a tear" (Vinz, p. 145).*

Through this work I have struggled to bring voice to my own stories and to attempt to un-know the known of my experiences. I have also come understand, "The lives of ordinary people are...just as potentially illuminating as the lives of those who have attained some form of externally-defined greatness" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 81). But, I am also aware that while "Stories are most instructive when they are most personal...this is also the time when the owners of the stories are most vulnerable" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 82) and this has import for me as a researcher, a colleague, a teacher, a friend and a person.

So begins my journey through the research process with Sean, Tom, Steve and Mauren, four practicing school principals. They work in elementary, middle and junior high schools in large and small urban as well as rural communities in Alberta and they willingly share their stories as, together, we come to understand the experiences of leaders on the current school landscape. I have chosen to begin with Sean whom I came to know well as a fellow student at the University of Alberta.

Chapter 5

Sean's Story

Sean's story is one of informal mentoring relationships that include senior administration, principal colleagues and teaching staff. The primary function mentorship has fulfilled in his professional life is of career advancement through the support of senior administrators and, more recently, accessing advice from two principals whom he trusts. He also values a relationship with one of his teachers with whom he collaborates on issues of interest and concern having to do with his school. However, after four years in the principalship, Sean is looking to establish other relationships that can support him in the development of higher-level skills that would positively impact his leadership practice.

"Throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Dream. Discover." (quote selected by Sean)

We Begin

I first met Sean in an evening class at the university. Our group of fourteen masters and doctoral students was studying narrative inquiry and working towards an understanding of the role story plays in our lives. Sean and I became participants in the same small writing group and, over the weeks, I learned of his upbringing and family life in rural Alberta; his experiences as a young boy, one of four brothers, attending the local school; and the roots of his deep passion for those students labeled in today's vernacular as "at-risk."

Over the course of our classes together and our shared conversations, Sean and I talk a great deal about the role we, as educators and as school leaders, play in the lives of students, parents and staff. During the past three years in the principalship, Sean's perspective has evolved and his own understanding of the responsibilities he has and his opportunities to make a difference have broadened. He has reflected at length on his *changing perspective and I find his experiences engaging and, in many ways, his commitment, passion and questioning mirror my own.*

The interesting thing, where it sort of runs different for me is where I was never really a teacher in a regular school. I taught in schools on reserves and in institutions…So my slant was always to reach out to those on the edge…I'm letting go of that a little bit more now and realizing I'm not responsible just for the high risk kids, I'm responsible for all three hundred in my school.

During our class discussions Sean reflected openly on his work as a middle school principal and his efforts to break down the unspoken barriers between students, parents, teachers and administrators. He believes there cannot and must not be a sense of "us" versus "them', "experts" versus "rookies" in today's school system. I was taken by his passion and by what I perceived as an honesty and openness to share and explore his own beliefs as a teacher and especially as a principal. Many educators express informally, their frustrations at being expected to have "all the answers"—on teaching and learning; child rearing and child/adolescent development; human relationship and daily and family living. Sometimes the list can seem endless.

In this instance, I am most intrigued by a principal who appears so willing to question his own practice and his role in administering a school. I am drawn by Sean's openness in considering the alternatives and perspectives offered in the literature and by the members of our class. Increasingly he begins to represent for me an educator who wants to do the very best for his students, despite the wide range of individual needs and unique circumstances. Sean acknowledges education today is hard work and that he, on his own, does not have all the answers. He refers to the complexities of our current school system and the increasing number of challenges facing educational leaders and his stories and experiences begin to shed a light on how all of these demands and varying perspectives impact the role, the thinking and the life of a school principal. **I've come to realize that running a school is more than just having kids in classes, a supervision schedule and all those things. That's not a new realization of course, but there is more to running a school than just that…. What is our vision? What direction are we going in? How do I implement long-term change? How do we go with the cutting edge stuff that is coming out? How do we change the culture of the school? How do we support teachers and parents? I think the mechanics of running a school are just a very small part of the principalship…..[but] the day-to-day paperwork—administrivia--seems to be really getting in the way of my visioning for the future. So I keep thinking of what could be and I can't seem to get past the pile of paper on my desk to the point where I can start talking with people about what could be.**

Although I have asked each of my participants to commit to approximately one hour sessions, Sean sets aside a full morning for each of our conversations. I am conscious of his busy schedule and yet, when we meet, he is relaxed and indicates that he enjoys the opportunity to talk with a colleague, saying he considers the time to be a personal commitment to his own professional development. He acknowledges that this may not "look" like professional development to some but the opportunities he has to reflect and dialogue with colleagues is something he values. We cover many topics and I too find our discussions professionally developing. I am again struck by Sean's complete willingness to openly share his thoughts, concerns and doubts. He is also interested in narrative inquiry and I wonder if his open and forthright manner are as a result of the *time he spent in our class and the opportunities we had to explore our stories and reflect on personal and professional experiences. By reflecting on this aspect of our interaction, I find I am attending more closely to the role context and relationship play in the research process. As a result of the relationship Sean and I have developed, over time, and the trust that we already share, I sense a willingness to be more candid, to offer more personally revealing stories and an invitation to engage in an even more meaningful and open relationship than that which we previously enjoyed during our class activities.*

I am learning so much just by listening, sharing and attending and I am finding myself becoming a protégé to these my mentors, as I gain a deeper and richer understanding of who these principals are and how they have come to compose their lives as educational leaders.

Sean talks about his primary goal as a principal being that of creating a sense of shared community within his school. He quickly points out that all the members of his school community have knowledge and expertise that is critical to doing the best job possible in educating students. He thinks of himself as a collaborative individual and he values the input of parents, students and staff. He reinforces, **one cannot have all the answers and that's why we call it a community of learners.** However, he sometimes finds himself in situations where others expect him, as the formal leader, to have the required knowledge and expertise and to make the appropriate decisions. **I think back to the quote that said all of the world's knowledge cannot be contained within one language…and I guess it's true; one person doesn't have all the answers. I don't have all the answers so there are other people out there who can help me with that and there isn't "a" right answer. I think some people feel, in order to be**

acknowledged or worthy or competent, they have to have all the answers. And I just think what a scary and lonely place to be if I thought I had to have all the answers. Well, I couldn't do it; I couldn't function.

As if supporting Sean's observations Barth (1997) cautions that one obstacle to principals' continued learning is the belief that by engaging visibly and publicly as learners they will be admitting a lack of ability. However, he asserts that principals cannot lead where they are not willing to go and mentorship, which supports ongoing personal and professional growth, is one way to assist with this process.

Much has been written about the benefits of mentoring relationships (Sullivan, 2004; Mullen, 2004; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2000) and there appears to be a certain assumption that all individuals, especially newcomers to a career or position, are interested in participating in such a process. However, there is little research on the personal characteristics which make for effective or receptive participants, especially those who may be considered the recipients of support and/or guidance from one who is deemed to be more knowledgeable and/or experienced. In fact, "public norms of many school systems indicate that any experienced administrator who admits he or she needs help is an ineffective administrator. In many ways, the Lone Ranger vision of school administration is alive and well and can serve as a very large obstacle to the establishment of vibrant and worthwhile mentorship and/or the continuation of professional development and growth (Daresh, 2001, 21). As an experienced principal Sean seems to vacillate between embracing and distancing himself from mentorship. On the one hand he values professional dialogue, collegiality and professional development. He is also committed to strengthening his leadership skills and practice and is aware there are others within his jurisdiction with whom and from whom he could learn a great deal. There are also others with whom he might like to engage in a collaborative and educative partnership. However, he is uncertain of the process, how to initiate and create what he needs and wants and is worried about the time commitment given his hectic work schedule and his desire to balance his personal and professional lives. His present network assists him when new and challenging situations arise but he seems to sense there are possibilities within mentorship that have, otherwise, eluded him.

I am curious as to how many other leaders have similar feelings about mentorship and if that presents an obstacle to creating meaningful, formalized programs. Must there be a type of openness and/or a certain set of beliefs that motivate an individual to seek out or be available to mentoring opportunities, especially those offered through formal programming? What is it that leads to the creation of mentoring relationships and what sustains them? How can mentoring meet the needs of an experienced principal such as Sean? What role does time play in the process? There are so many questions associated with both informal and formal mentoring. Descriptive studies focused on principals' experiences are so necessary if we are to gain a deeper understanding of this topic and I am frustrated reading the fictional vignettes provided in some of the current manuals; they seem so superficial and devoid of authentic human experience.

A Shared Conversation

It is almost Christmas and our class is coming to an end for this semester. It is our final session and we are sharing a potluck feast which seems to represent the cultures and personalities of our diverse group of students. As we make our final farewells Sean *stops me to say that he might be interested in participating in my research study. He has been thinking about mentorship throughout our small group discussions this term and has been reflecting on the relationship he shares with a particular colleague whom he would consider to be a mentor. He is concerned, however, because he is not sure their relationship "fits" the more traditional definition of mentoring. Recently our writing group has been puzzling over the role of "relationship" in mentoring and Sean shares that, for him, a warm and personal relationship is not necessarily a critical component. Rather, he is most interested in how the man he considers a mentor administers his school, effects change and realizes his vision. They do not meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and philosophies, do not socialize outside of their working environment and in fact, this colleague may not even consider himself to be functioning as a mentor to Sean.*

Sean is concerned that this may not be the type of relationship I am interested in studying. Quite frankly, I am intrigued. As I struggle to understand mentoring, its impact on leadership practice and the possibilities mentoring offers, I am looking forward to learning from my participants and expanding my understanding of how mentoring plays out in the lives of today's school principal. Sean's brief comment encourages me to think of mentoring from a somewhat different perspective and I am anxious to learn more.

It would appear the parameters and process for effective mentoring may not need to be as structured as some would think. As I learn more from reading, listening to my participants, talking with colleagues and attending to the work in my own district, I am beginning to question, to wonder and to imagine what is and what could be with regards to mentorship especially for educational leaders.

Crow and Matthews (1998) have turned their attention towards school administrators and observe, "the major goal of mentoring [at the administrative level] is the development of dynamic school leaders who cultivate a learning community" (p. 84). In this way, they do not limit our thinking rather they direct our focus towards a broader consideration of the purpose and function of mentorship. In effect this opens the door to a range of possibilities with regards to process and the types of relationships that could effectively and successfully achieve those outcomes. These current researchers are among a handful (Mullen, 2005; Higgins, 2000; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Jipson & Paley, 2000) who challenge us to reconsider and reimagine mentorship taking it beyond the more traditional, hierarchical structure of expert paired with novice and focused on the latter's skill development and career advancement.

Through my ongoing exploration in this area, my understanding of the possibilities is broadening. Over the months, through my conversations with Sean and my other participants, I began to imagine new alternatives that shifted my thinking towards mentorship as a lifelong process, one that embraces reciprocal relationships and flexible groupings...

It is a cold winter morning and Sean and I have planned our first meeting. We will meet in my family room which is quiet and still. The coffee is brewing and I wonder if Sean has chosen this type of environment because it allows us to remove ourselves from the non-stop demands and noise of the regular working day. I recollect the setting of our Narrative Inquiry class, a space where participants felt encouraged to explore openly and engage in a wide-ranging, interactive conversation around a common table located in an environment of relaxed collegiality. I hope my conversations with Sean will reflect a similar personal and professional camaraderie.

I think of my topic and am reminded of how infrequently educators have the opportunity to sit, quietly and undisturbed, for a period of time, to have a free-flowing conversation, sharing personal stories, experiences and issues that are important to them and their work. I wonder about the role of time and place in the mentoring process. Each of my participants has chosen a different venue to meet and, in some ways, they are reflective of what is important or significant to them and their lives as principals. I sense 'place' and 'space' are important considerations in terms of the research and mentoring process.

Sean arrives and is relaxed and open; we pick up from where we last left off in our class and I find him easy to talk to yet thoughtful and reflective. He talks about his struggles with the many challenges facing educators today and how he balances these with what he knows is good and right for students. In this regard I feel a certain kinship with him and perhaps this is one of reasons why I am looking forward to working with him.

Over the months I have reflected on what it was that prompted Sean to volunteer so much of his time to my research study. I suspect that part of it may have had to do with the collegial relationship we shared in our classes and the opportunities to work in several smaller "works-in-progress" groups. I have thought to myself that this is how my own professional relationships have begun—by committing the time to a shared activity and/or common purpose or goal. In these ways I have learned much but at times there have also been special connections and sometimes a mutual willingness to 'take the next *step' in building an ongoing relationship. I wonder about the wholeness that has led Sean to participate in my research... As our time together draws to an end he will indicate that he has thought of this as professional development for himself, a moment in time he has taken for himself, away from his office and the school, an opportunity to sit with a colleague, to reflect on issues that interest him and to engage in professional dialogue—an addition to his professional network and, to some degree, a moment of co-mentorship.*

Coming to Administration: Career Mentoring

At the outset of our meeting Sean explains he is not really sure how he would define or describe mentorship but he does believe there are several people he would consider mentors and he is looking forward to talking about his relationships with them as well as the concept of mentoring in general. He has been doing a lot of thinking about the topic and believes himself to be open and receptive to the mentoring process; in fact, he has benefited from mentorship in at least several ways.

During our first meeting Sean reflects on his career as an educator and his path to administration. Early on he experienced support from several individuals who encouraged him to consider administration and he shares examples of how they not only provided him with opportunities to demonstrate his skills but they also actively promoted his advancement. He recalls the principal of the boys' academy who, when she knew she would be leaving, sat Sean down and clearly indicated she wanted him to be her successor. She was direct in encouraging him, provided him with opportunities to prove himself and advocated on his behalf. **She had confidence in me; it was she who really pushed me into it.** This principal's influence seems to have initiated Sean's first thoughts of himself as a possible school administrator and from this time he began to perceive himself as having the potential and the skills to assume such a role.

This was not, however, Sean's only experience in terms of mentorship and career advancement. Once the academy was absorbed into a neighbouring jurisdiction, Sean gained the confidence of his senior administrative team. In order to move from the principalship in his unique and alternative school to a principalship in one of the district's "regular" schools, Sean was advised to accept an assistant principalship. This would allow him to gain added experience within his new district. Sean believes the Superintendent **...fast-tracked my career. I was very lucky in that and had the privilege of working with four of our senior principals...they chose to put me with our top people; that must have meant they had some aspiration for me...They gave me the opportunity to show some of the skills I had and had the confidence to put me in the situation to test me and see how I did.**

Sean attributes his rise to the principalship directly to the mentoring he received from significant and influential colleagues. Ferriero (1982) agrees that one function of mentorship is to open doors for the protégé. "Mentors can…expose [protégés] to as many activities and people as possible so that when opportunities arise, the [protégé] will be remembered" (cited in Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 67). In this way the mentor, as an experienced and influential individual within the organization, coaches; exposes; and promotes the protégé as he/she advances in his/her career. Crow and Matthews (1998) further suggest, "without good mentors who assist, sponsor and promote an assistant principal, a career move to a principalship is unlikely" (p. 85). *I wonder about the validity of this statement however I am aware that, for Sean, myself and at least one of my other* *participants, in particular, mentorship was very instrumental in our advancement in administration.*

However, mentorship that focuses primarily or solely on career advancement may be fraught with unanticipated concerns particularly if it fails to offer support during the transitional periods and/or initial stages of one's career. As Kram (1985) points out, in many of these circumstances, "…concerns about competence reemerge with critical events that challenge one's positive views of self" (p. 83). She goes on to suggest that it is at these times in particular that mentoring can serve to facilitate skill development and knowledge enhancement. Despite the support of others and their confidence in his leadership ability, Sean's unfolding story captures the reality of these observations.

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship

Although some individuals progress into the principalship directly from the classroom, it is in the assistant principalship that aspiring leaders might hope to find the type of mentoring that will assist them in developing the breadth and depth of skills necessary for a smooth, confident and effective transition into the principalship. Crow and Matthews (1998) support this concept and suggest, "An important goal for the assistant principal is to acquire the knowledge, skills, behaviors and values of a competent administrator in a relatively short time…" (p. 84). However, the reasonableness of such expectations is difficult to ascertain since individual experiences in this role vary widely. Generally the responsibilities of the assistant principal are determined by the particular principal and, as "[t]he role of the assistant principal is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in professional journals and books focusing on educational leadership" there appears to be limited understanding of and lack of consistency in this unique position (Weller & Weller, 2002, xiii). Ideally, the principal will serve as a "guide and model while the [assistant principal] actually performs leadership tasks and gains practical experience. In this role leaders [can] encourage, inspire, tutor, and mold their charges into future leaders" (Weller & Weller, 2002, 16).

Sean talks about spending several years as an assistant principal before progressing to a principalship of his own. During this time his work offered a number of learning opportunities and, under the tutelage of experienced leaders, he was able to develop skills and attributes necessary for school administration. During his five years in the position he worked with four respected principals and indicates this gave him a variety of insights. Upon reflection though, he acknowledges that the frequent moves he experienced, while advantageous for his advancement, also had some unforeseen drawbacks. On the one hand he was able to observe each individual principal's style of leadership, his/her interactions with parents, staff and students and he came to know something of each one's vision and values in terms of education and learning. Although the time he spent in the individual schools was relatively short, there were two principals in particular, Jim and Colin, whose style and vision for leadership impressed him. By working alongside these men he came to understand that their philosophical beliefs and the ways in which they storied themselves as principals resonated within him and it was to them he would turn in seeking mentorship as an assistant principal and later on in the principalship. **I have trust in [the individuals I consider mentors] because I think they're authentic, that they're going to give me advice based on their philosophy. So**

I really guess mentorship [for me] wants to come from people who have a similar philosophy, or stand for similar things...I know when I go to Jim and look for his advice, his decision or advice is going to be based on what he believes and I think he believes some of the same things I believe.

Over the weeks Sean talks about the importance of common philosophies, personal authenticity and trust. It is however the latter characteristic that captures my attention. It is a term that seems to come up frequently in my conversations with principals and I am aware of its significance in mentoring relationships. In many ways, 'trust" has been identified as, "the glue that holds organizations together" (Bennis & Townsend, 1995, p. 61, cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 194) and a critical component of meaningful relationships. In establishing mentorship between and among administrators trust appears to be essential. "People with whom we have a sense of trust give us a safe place to experiment, to try out unfamiliar parts of our leadership repertoire in a no-risk setting" (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002, p. 162).

Sean reinforces that the trust which has developed over time in his relationships with both Jim and Colin allows him to seek out either of these two men when he has questions and concerns. They never make him feel "less than" or compromised in his role as principal and their understanding of the intricacies of the principalship provide him with a supportive network. He consults with them, seeks their input on certain issues and values their professionalism. The time he spent working with each of them in the assistant principalship, facilitated the development of relationships that have continued into his principalship. One of my other participants, Tom, was also able to observe and learn from the work of his principal, Burt, and so too has Sean developed connections with those whose work he knows and respects.

There were, of course, other principals with whom he worked but their beliefs and the ways in which they carried out their leadership duties did not seem to align with Sean's vision for his own practice. They are colleagues and in some ways friends but not confidantes and certainly not mentors. He does not turn to them for advice and guidance nor for professional dialogue or debate. *Steve has made similar distinctions in those he calls colleagues and friends and those he calls mentors. With all four of my participants, the depth of relationship seems to result in a significant difference between colleague, friend and mentor and Sean expresses similar kinds of distinctions.*

However, while Sean acknowledges that the assistant principalship allowed him to establish these two positive, sustained and supportive relationships he also shares that there were disadvantages to his rapid movement and the limited time he spent working with and for each of his principal colleagues. **There were never any roots really. I never had to be responsible for much because I always found out in April I was moving…**

I think when you're new in a relationship, it takes six, eight months just to figure out the mode of operation, the real mechanics of how this relationship is going to work. I think when you work with someone for an extended period of time, two, three or four years, you begin to understand them as a person connected to their work. And you start to see them living out some of the things they want to do. So I think, without having the extended relationship, you never really get past that sort of mechanical 'this is how we're doing [the relationship].'

A part of me felt a little bit cheated, that I didn't spend more time with them, to learn just a little bit more about administration. Because if anything it's kind of frustrating right now, third year in as a principal and I'm kind of wondering, do I have all the skills and the tools that I really need to carry out this job? Part of me is a little tentative about that. I think, had I worked a little bit longer or with a formal mentor, maybe I would have a few more of the tools I need.

As Sean has gained increasing experience within the principalship he has found himself facing new challenges, beyond the spectrum of management/technical tasks such as budgeting, timetabling and supervision schedules. His 'bigger questions' focus on such things as: developing a sustainable and effective Professional Learning Community; working through change and the associated resistance to it; and the ever changing and challenging demands of educational stakeholders.

As I reflect on my own career I am aware that, with each transition—beginning teacher; new counselor; school administrator; Central Office administrator—there were not only new skills to learn but, as time passed and my confidence and expertise grew, there were questions focused on how to extend my own practice. This dilemma always reminds me of a principal colleague who wondered, "How can I know if I am fulfilling my own potential when I don't know what I don't know?" Sean seems to be expressing similar thoughts and I wonder how many leaders share these types of sentiments. It strikes me that it is one thing to express uncertainty at the start of a new challenge when others expect uncertainty but it is sometimes our fear of seeming incapable, or 'less-than' *that prevents us from reaching out when we are expected to be capable, knowledgeable and skilled.*

With the evolution to site-based management in education, government calls for higher levels of accountability and growing demands of parents and community members, principals are increasingly being asked to assume a greater number of duties and responsibilities. "In the past, principals could be content to work directly with teachers, parents, students and staff in their own schools without becoming directly involved in the political process…" (Daresh, 2002, p. 51). However, as the role of the principal continues to evolve so too do the requirements to learn new skills and achieve some level of balance between managerial and leadership responsibilities. As Sean reflects on his experience in the assistant principalship, he is aware that the exposure to a number of accomplished principals and several challenging situations provided him with greater visibility and an opportunity to demonstrate and refine his abilities and talents in administration. However, and quite importantly, he did not have the chance to work alongside any of the principals long enough to observe and learn about how they implemented and continued to encourage and support over time, various initiatives in their schools. Similarly, he was not able to observe, over time, how they dealt with the wide range of complex and sometimes unique issues that arrive, unexpectedly, at the principal's door.

Now Sean finds that he does not have the depth of knowledge or range of skills that are typically the result of extensive guided experience. His theoretical knowledge, gained from his university studies, offers him a degree of expertise but he feels somewhat limited in a number of the practical experiences so important in reaching an expert level of practice. He was not able to observe and be involved with the successes and failures of more experienced principals, to reflect and converse with them or to experiment with particular initiatives over time and he believes his own practice has been affected by this.

These days, as a more experienced principal himself, he feels comfortable with the managerial component of his job. However, as he strives to continually improve his leadership skills he finds himself facing increasingly bigger and more complex questions pertaining to the role of a leader and how to effect meaningful, sustained change in his school. In thinking about mentoring, he seems to yearn for the type of ongoing, collaborative, developmental relationships that would help him think about and enhance his practice as a principal.

Reflecting on the Principalship

Moving into the principalship brought many changes—new demands and new challenges—yet Sean laughs as he describes his first day on the job. **I remember being the principal and everybody got to class the first day so I thought, "I don't know what to do!" I wasn't naïve but certainly there was a bit of a lull when everybody was in their classrooms with teachers. After all, nobody's being sent down to the office on the first day. So, I wondered, now what do I do?!**

Over the past three years he has become comfortable in his role as principal and proud of the school environment he and his staff have created. During his tenure in the assistant principalship and the principalship he has developed a small network of trusted colleagues to whom he can turn as a source of advice on issues of concern. With each he knows where they stand in terms of their beliefs, values and, very importantly to Sean, their commitment to kids. It seems that the single most important aspect for Sean, as he reflects on those whom he calls mentors, is their authenticity. He is clear, for him it all **comes down to finding the right person who you think is really authentic in what they're saying and doing.**

For one of my participants, Tom, it's about passion and setting a high bar; for another, Maureen, it's credibility and focus; for yet another, Steve, ethics and 'je ne sais quoi'; and for Sean, it's authenticity. Underlying all of these seems to be an ongoing drive to learn and grow both personally and professionally, a sense of lifelong learning.

Sean reflects on a number of individuals with whom he has worked but ultimately there are just the three—Jim and Colin (two former principals) and Ettie, a classroom teacher, all of whom Sean considers as mentors. **I think of these people as being dedicated to what they do and so good at what they do and so authentic. They're here for the reasons we all want to say we're here for. I believe they are there for kids and for education and they show that in so many different ways. I think that's why I see them as mentors. I have so much respect for [them] I can't help but go to [them] for advice.**

We have talked a good deal about Jim and although Sean respects and in some ways aspires to Jim's professional image, that alone does not reflect the qualities that have resulted in him looking to Jim for mentorship. It is Jim's core values and the ways in which they influence his work and his relationships that Sean admires and appreciates. **I've watched him. I've listened to him at admin meetings and, when I watched him on staff I have a respect for the way that he operates, the way he treats people, the**

way he makes decisions, his integrity. So I've watched him live out those values and therefore I know I have a lot of respect for him and confidence in him. It is this "whole package" as well as Jim's quick and clear approach to problems that draws Sean when he is seeking advice and guidance on a particular issue. **He doesn't get clouded with a lot of political or a lot of personal stuff. And in terms of not having a relationship, I'm not going out to his lake on the weekends and barbecuing with his family. He keeps his two lives very separate and I think I have some respect for that. He's never made me 'feel less' than. He is truly willing to help…and he's so quick and clear with his answers.**

I am interested in understanding what Sean means when he talks about Jim being "quick and clear with his answers." I had pictured mentoring as a time for shared conversation and reflective thinking and dialogue. However, Sean, as with the others, has placed mentoring within the context of advice-giving and reinforces the need to consider a broad range of functions within the definition of mentoring.

Mostly I'm phoning him to get his opinion and then I take it away. I'm not phoning him to discuss the issue about what we think is best but I'm phoning him and saying, 'What would you do in this situation?' I wonder aloud if this constitutes mentorship. **Yes, yes very much so.** Sean assures me. **There are just some people, the ones I respect, who I just think have the answers, who have dealt with things, who have thought things through and who are able to provide clear direction and I think this is part of mentorship—providing clear direction. And I can use that however I want. So, with mentoring, with some of the decisions, you go back to the people you feel you can trust and respect.**

Levinson et al. (1978) would agree and suggests, "mentoring is defined not in terms of formal rules but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves" (cited in Sullivan, 2004, p. 20). I find myself imagining once again that mentorship serves its greatest function when it meets the needs of the individuals involved and is flexible enough to change and evolve as the needs and context in which the individuals find themselves change and evolve. Sean admits that he is most likely to call upon Jim when he is confronted with a new and challenging situation and he knows that Jim's approach and perspective will reflect his own. **Not so very long ago I came up against a tough issue, or tough for me as a newer principal…and I wasn't sure what to do so I phoned Jim.** He indicates that Jim did not spend time speculating, analyzing or engaging in "district gossip" but rather placed the situation within a larger context, offered his own rationale and thought process in reflecting on the situation and provided a suggestion for action. **And you know what? He was absolutely right and he was so quick and clear with it. He was right…Jim was just dead on with his answer…He threw in some different considerations; it wasn't just a cut and dried answer but he was absolutely clear on what needed to be done.**

Despite his desire for clear and concise advice, I also hear Sean talking about mentoring that would allow for ongoing and in-depth collegial dialogue. He puzzles over whether his experience of the principalship and his practice of leadership would benefit from mentorship that originated from a principal colleague whose style and beliefs were quite different from his own and decides there might be possibilities he hadn't previously considered. His district has been examining formalized programming, something he's been reluctant to take advantage of; his schedule is full and there are many competing *demands on his time. This is interesting to me since he has made time for our meetings, beyond my expectations. I am curious to know if his reluctance stems from a hesitation to work with colleagues he does not know or with whom he has no shared history or if there are other factors coming into play?*

This notion of mentoring continues to seem like a kaleidoscope: as I examine it from one perspective I am presented with one image, one slight twist of the scope and there is a significantly different image— sponsorship; role modeling; advice-giving; skill development; co-mentoring; friendship. Throughout the conversations with my participants I discover they are all present, all necessary. Common threads begin to emerge but even they are multitudinous!

A Mosaic of Support

Today Sean reflects once again on Jim and Colin as he explains, **...sometimes you want to go to different people for different advice because you think that they have more expertise in that area.** This understanding of mentoring is supported by others (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Kram, 1985) who indicate that in the early stages of their careers individuals may tend to rely more heavily on primary mentors, experienced colleagues who generally focus on both career and psychosocial functions in a caring, exclusive and somewhat parental fashion. Later, individuals may find themselves more often in relationship with a number of secondary mentors who are generally easier to come by and who tend to engage in more mutual relationships. Darling (1986) has advised that an openness to multiple mentors and mentoring experiences can serve to benefit the individual who is seeking opportunities and relationships for growth. Focusing on one primary mentor to the exclusion of other mentoring strategies, including secondary mentoring colleagues and "mentoring events, situations, circumstances of life, books one reads and/or crises one faces," (p. 15) can significantly detract from the creation of a mentoring mosaic that will strengthen and guide an individual's development.

Colin, also a former principal, provides Sean with more mentoring support in issues that are politically charged. **With regards to Jim, I know what philosophy grounds him so I think I'll be comfortable with what he says; I think it'll make sense to me...The same is true for Colin but he is the complete opposite of Jim. He's the political animal, the one who's on the phone saying [what's happening here and there.]... He has a very different pulse on the district because he involves himself with that...I phoned him the other morning and I said, "So, are you in a meeting with the Superintendent?... The Deputy?... A Trustee?" [He responded 'No' to all three.] So I said, "Well, what are you doing if you're not meeting with someone important?!"**

Navigating the political waters can be increasingly more challenging for school principals especially given the multiple stakeholder groups and complex issues with which they deal. Bolman and Deal (2000) concur and suggest,

> Politics will not go away whenever the basic conditions of the political frame are present: enduring differences, scarce resources, and interdependence. Enduring differences mean that people will interpret events and situations differently and will often have difficulty agreeing on what is important or even what is true. Scarce resources mean that no one can have everything that he or she wants and that decisions about who gets what must constantly be made. Interdependence

> means that people cannot simply ignore one another: they need each other's assistance, support and resources. Under these conditions, attempts to eliminate politics drives them under the rug and into the closet, where they become even more counterproductive and unmanageable (pp. 164-165).

Sean believes that Colin has provided him with helpful and insightful advice on a number of occasions and serves to increase his understanding of and sense of security in these areas. **I think I know now who to trust and who not to. We have some people in our district who are really good at stirring things up and sending young naïve people out into the battlefield. I've been caught a couple of times doing that—listening to them and then stepping forward and then thinking, "Wow, what am I doing?...whoops!...backtrack!"**

Colin understands the political culture of the district, its subtleties and implications and, as a result of their relationship, Sean is able to access support and enhance his understanding of and attention to the political aspects of his leadership role. He can deal appropriately and diplomatically with situations before they escalate and/or jeopardize himself and/or his school community.

Having access to the experience and wisdom of Jim and Colin has proven invaluable for Sean thus far in his journey through the principalship. These mentors help guide his thinking when he finds himself in situations that are particularly challenging. It is typically advice he is seeking and he feels comfortable calling upon them; as he says, in many instances he can predict their responses but this also helps to reaffirm his own level of competence and insight. He is confident in his ability to make decisions based on the input he has gathered and on his perception of the situation and he does not feel compelled to act on their advice but uses it to balance and strengthen his own knowledge base. Simply hearing himself talk about a concern, out loud, and knowing he is not alone with his issues and concerns is important to him. This more collaborative form of mentoring can assist even experienced administrators in solving problems. "Peers who have had similar concerns and problems can suggest solutions and methods for helping [another] administrator" and, with input to reflect upon, Sean feels supported in his decision making process. (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 149).

However, while he indicates that Jim and Colin are two mentors with whom he shares the experience of the principalship, he also speaks of Ettie, a member of his staff, with whom he previously team-taught and who presently serves as a lead teacher in his school. **I would consider Jim and Colin to be my two main mentors but on my staff, [there is] Ettie… As a Lead Teacher she has release time when we get together and she tends to stay late. She finds lots of opportunities to come in and talk with me. It always starts around a conversation about a student but then goes off in a few different directions. There's that relationship of trust…and I believe she's very much part of leadership in our school…I just really respect her opinion and she's so good with at-risk (special ed) students; she's just so child centered; she's so dedicated to her students.**

In Ettie, Sean sees a similar passion for and commitment to "at-risk" students that has motivated him throughout his career. He respects her style and practice and the authenticity she brings to her teaching and interactions. As a result he feels comfortable talking openly with Ettie, sharing his questions and concerns and reflecting critically on his practice. Despite this collaborative, developmental relationship he sees their interactions in a somewhat different context than those he shares with Jim and Colin.

Their discussions, which can be quite far reaching, seem to center more on specific school and student issues while his questions of Jim and Colin focus on broader concerns and are directed more towards leadership practices, district issues and/or the various challenges faced by those in the principalship.

I wonder if this relationship with Ettie, which is hierarchical in its structure (teacher—principal) can be considered mentoring. When there are aspects of evaluation and job security woven into the fabric of the working relationship, can there also be mentoring? Intertwined with this is my own reflection on the practical dynamic of teacher and principal working together—would Ettie echo Sean's feelings of camaraderie, collaboration and equality? Does she feel comfortable challenging his practice...his decisions...his knowledge? Crow and Matthews (1998) acknowledge just this type of relationship and suggest, "Peer mentoring relationships [can] emerge between administrators and teachers when they serve to guide one another in their role development"(p. 146). However, I still wonder how easily these relationships develop. Are there facets of the hierarchical nature of the positions that impact the interactions and, if so, in what ways do these influence the individuals involved; their relationship and interactions; and/or the outcome of their work together?

Border Crossings: Connecting with Senior Administrators

Sean has also been reflecting on a mentoring relationship he would like to cultivate, another which would cross the arbitrary lines established by differing roles, responsibilities and hierarchical positioning but one which would see Sean benefiting from the experiences of others who are more experienced and senior to himself.

This is not the first time I have heard of a principal looking to be mentored by his/her Superintendent. While doing some research for a graduate course I had the opportunity to meet with a principal, and together, we explored his recollections of the first year of his principalship. He began by describing his feelings of loneliness and isolation. No longer able to claim automatic membership in the "Teacher Club," he realized quickly that he had also lost his ability to stand with one foot in each camp, as he had when he was an assistant principal. Although he enjoyed a positive relationship with the staff, he was, in essence, alone and the buck really did stop at his desk. "Here I was, responsible for XX students, XX dollars and no one from District Office ever came by to say, 'How's it going?' or to sit and have a cup of coffee. When I worked as a manager at a local hardware store, the boss frequently took the time to drop in to see how I was doing, to give me advice and the occasional compliment." He laughed and explained that he had begun to think of it as a 'No news is good news," story.

Early in our conversations I was intrigued when Sean shared a similar experience and similar feelings. **I think the area where I feel alone is when it involves senior administration....I feel like their attitude is, "No news is good news;" you must be doing a fine job...In the first couple of years as a principal I was often left thinking, does anyone know I exist; do they care what decisions I make or are they just happy with what I'm doing or will they come to me if the world is falling apart?... I think that's where I felt the isolation. What do the people I'm working for think?**

He likened it somewhat to the role he plays with new staff. **I think there needs to be that mentoring with my boss and a connection with them on a fairly regular basis. I mean, we as principals try to do that with beginning teachers, where you'll**

pop in, stay after school one night and just make a point of going into the classroom and saying, "How are things going? You've been at it two months now, do you have any concerns?"...I think that kind of mentoring is very important. He continues to explain his desire to engage in what he might consider a mentoring relationship with his superintendent. **They're wonderful at giving advice when you need it but I guess I need something a little bit more. I think I was able to articulate it one day and I said, "You know, I'm not afraid of you, I'm afraid of disappointing you and that's why I need or like direction or that's why we need to talk."...I think we need to have a place with our bosses where we can go when we're really stuck in the face with something. I think we need to have a place where we can go and say, "I need some support or help or direction."**

As I was talking about this concept with a former principal, she indicated, throughout her first year in the principalship, she and her Superintendent had shared a journal. She would write her thoughts, questions and wonderings, place the journal on a bus to make the journey some miles to District Office and he would respond, reflect and question in reply. Their shared "conversation" filled the entire year and fourteen notebooks and provided her with a wealth of support, insight and confidence as well as a collection of conversations that she continues to value. I envied her the opportunity to call upon such a wealth of experience and knowledge, to have it available to inform her own growth and development as a leader and to be able to engage in such a personal and meaningful relationship with someone she obviously admired and respected. I find Sean responding in similar ways to those he feels can help to enhance his skill development.

He seems so open to experiences from varying sources and he finds value in interactions with a range of colleagues.

Similarly Sean contemplates how he would envision a mentoring relationship with his Superintendent. **I think what I would like to have available to me is a senior administrator who I can sit down with and say, 'This is the scenario; give me some advice' or "This is the direction I want to go in what do you think of that?' or "What do you think are the downsides, the downfalls of going in that direction?'"** By seeking to add the Superintendent to his network of mentors, Sean would create a mentoring mosaic that incorporates teachers, principals, colleagues and senior administration

Telling, Retelling and Reimagining

Several months later we return to the topic of Sean's experience with his Superintendent. It is spring and Sean and I are finding our time filled with the myriad activities that invade schools and school jurisdictions come May and June. But, we have agreed to further conversations and settle on an early morning, in my office. We have stayed away from our offices, choosing instead the quiet and peace of my home. Perhaps it is that environment that has allowed us to share wide-ranging and lengthy conversations about education, ourselves, our beliefs and our practice. I am comfortable in our relationship but take pains to ensure that we will not be disturbed. I value our conversations and do not want them to change because of the new locale.

Sean has been involved in a number of activities and is thoughtful about a recent experience he has had with his superintendent. **It's interesting to see layers. I've**

thought a lot about administrators and mentoring and some really good support I've had from my superintendent in the last little while on a few tough issues. He was very willing to pick up the phone and say to me, I know that A, B and C are happening but I also want you to know this is what I believe about you. You know that you are running the school; it is your school; you make the decisions about what happens; we from Central Office are there for guidance and support and sometimes we may jump a little too quickly but ultimately remember that you are running the school and what your gut tells you is what you have to do. If your heart isn't in it, then it doesn't matter what plan someone from Central Office tells you to do. If it's not in your gut, it's not going to work.

Sean explained that there had been an extremely volatile situation with a parent and the superintendent had called together a number of the involved parties to discuss and develop an appropriate course of action. However, he conveyed a confidence in Sean, as the principal, that was seen as reassuring and empowering. **The difference I've come to realize is the closeness we've gotten recently. So, in my [previous observation] of senior admin by saying they didn't seem to be around, I have come to the conclusion that they are watching and when it comes to the crunch time they are there…So I think a huge part of mentoring is providing that guidance and then letting people go and saying, I'm here to support you.**

Sean now feels he can easily and comfortably dialogue with his Superintendent on some of the "big" issues he is facing. His recent experience has revealed a depth of confidence and trust on behalf of the Superintendent and this knowledge has provided Sean with the confidence to take risks and to try new behaviors assured there is a safety net and someone with whom he can openly discuss his thoughts, feelings and actions. Through a very challenging time, the Superintendent clearly articulated his confidence in Sean and, despite their differing positions on the educational landscape, —principal and Superintendent—Sean feels there is the potential to collaborate and to seek mentorship. As a result he believes he has added a new, highly experienced and respected resource to his network of mentors.

Mentorship Reimagined

Sean is comfortable in his role as school principal and with the support network he has developed. He believes he makes good use of the individuals whom he considers mentors and yet he senses there may be something more to the process and that he, himself, is at a stage in his development as a principal where he needs and wants more. **I think I am coming to realize that mentoring has to be something formal, that we meet at such and such a time to discuss certain issues. Because, when I look for advice I always feel just a little bit guilty for phoning another principal because I don't know what's going on in their school at the time and I don't know if they have 15 minutes to talk or five because a parent's coming in. So, you ask those questions, 'Do you have a couple of minutes? I need to ask you something.' But their time is valuable so, if it's just a matter of picking up the phone, I don't always feel comfortable doing that because it's a bit of an infringement and e-mail is not really the most appropriate way to deal with some issues.**

Now that Sean is in his fourth year, he indicates there are different and, as he describes it, **bigger issues** he is ready to deal with. Aspects of running the school such as creating a supervision schedule and developing a timetable have become routine and he has now turned his attention and his energy in other directions. Trusted colleagues have become an important part of his informal network. However, he also shares his interest in entering into a longer-term relationship that would legitimize his desire to engage in a different type of professional dialogue, one that might see experienced colleagues grappling with a wide range of educational issues. I ask if the process of formalizing mentorship would fail to respect the relational and trust aspects that seem important to Sean. **I'm starting to believe the more formalized mentoring [could include] some of the informal stuff and, when I think of the big questions I have in my mind about the direction I want to take my school, I think there's some professional questions that could be addressed in a formal sort of mentoring...**

When Sean refers to formal mentoring, he is including relationships that are facilitated, supported and orchestrated by his school district, encouraged and sanctioned by his superintendent and senior administrative team. Formally acknowledging the worth and merit of mentorship provides critical support for its implementation within school jurisdictions. However, Kram (1985) advises this must be done with some care as, "Organizational structures, norms and processes influence behavior in relationships with peers, superiors and subordinates…[and therefore can] encourage or impede effective relationship building," (p. 18). The role of the organization in structuring formalized programming requires careful consideration. In my own jurisdiction, I hear a very strong message from administrators that mentorship must be open and flexible enough to meet the needs of the individuals involved rather than addressing an organizational agenda intended to advance and entrench established values and norms. The ability to participate voluntarily, to select personal groupings and establish individualized goals and mentoring processes is advocated by the Alberta Teachers' Association in their handbook on administrative mentoring (currently in development). Regardless of the configuration Sean has come to reconsider and reimagine the possibilities for mentorship in his own life. **I'm starting to believe that every voice has some value and some element of truth just like my challenging parent; there's something for me to learn from her. Just like the teacher full of venom who sends me an e-mail I don't like, there are some elements of truth in there. So maybe administrators who are philosophically different than I am, I think there is some stuff there for me to learn. There are lots of areas of growth that I need to look at so why wouldn't I be able to grow from some of their experience? In a mentoring situation they're not telling me what I need to believe or do; they're sharing some of their experiences and reflecting, hopefully, on some of their practice and some of the things they've learned. So I should be able to get some value out of that.**

But maybe mentoring doesn't need to be one person. Maybe it doesn't need to just be two people sitting down. Maybe we could have more of a support group, a mentoring group where there's three or four people sitting down….It does happen informally but I think you could formally set up a mentorship program that could look like that…I don't see any administrators in our district saying, 'I know it all.' Or 'I have only two or three more years what do I need this for?'…I think even our senior administrators want to share their story and want to share what they've

learned...I guess up until now I've thought of mentorship as me phoning one principal or me meeting with one principal. But maybe it's bigger than that, or different. It could look from that; it could be a group getting together and sharing some common concerns, issues, topics, maybe stories.

Crow and Matthews (1998) advise, "Peer mentoring relationships often develop informally with administrators seeking relationships and alliances with others. Hearing others' concerns is comforting and telling one's own story is liberating"(146). Sean's wonders **...I'm beginning to think mentorship is more of a dialogue, of what could be, or where could we go with this, or what are some other ideas?...[where we can] come away with a sense that I'm not in this alone...So I feel like there's hope.**

Sean's desire to work collaboratively with others to enrich and strengthen his leadership practice is reflected in the experiences Tom has woven throughout his career. As a beginning administrator Tom had benefit of a mentor who he continues to view as a defining influence and his ongoing opportunities to work in relationship with colleagues reminds me of the type of mentoring mosaic Sean would like to create for himself. In Tom's story, which follows, I was filled with wonder by the notion of "A teacher; a mentor; a friend."

Chapter 6

Tom's Story

As I heard the words, "My mentor; my teacher; my friend," I knew I was being invited into a story of traditional, informal mentorship at its truest and strongest: Tom's story is of Burt and the development of a traditional mentoring relationship that has grown into a deep and lasting friendship. Nested within a context of lifelong learning and lifelong mentoring, Tom has added an array of coaching relationships to his network of colleagues and, as his expertise has grown, become a mentor himself.

We Begin

After a night of steady flurries it was still snowing on the morning I was to first meet with Tom. It was the type of Alberta snow that clogs the streets and slows the traffic. I phoned to say I was on my way and Tom simply laughed and acknowledged I wouldn't be the only one behind schedule that day; several of his staff had already failed to get to work on time. "Not a problem; I'll be ready whenever you get here." True to his word, when I finally arrived he was talking on the phone looking out to the main office through the large window he had had installed so he could be part of the comings and goings in his school. The secretary sat behind a desk surrounded by children's artwork, mementoes and plants and when Tom joined us the joking and teasing made a strong statement, "The folks in this school like and respect each other and enjoy working together."

I knew Tom from a shared committee and, although we had not worked closely together, he always exuded a friendly, outgoing and ultimately professional demeanor. His warm handshake, generous smile and genuine positive regard for others immediately establish a relaxed, friendly and positive tone-- it was thus during our shared time on the committee and so it was today in his office.

"Welcome to our school, Michele! Glad you made it safely. Come on in." Tom's office is tucked around the corner and, although small, it is filled with pictures of his family and samples of student work. Several awards hang on the walls and a guitar sits in the corner. Tom is a man of passion: education, students, colleagues, friends, music, his family, adventure. He speaks of all of these and so much more with enthusiasm and joy.

Tom has been a principal for many years—seventeen to be precise--and he talks about retiring within a year. He has had many diverse experiences and made numerous contacts at all levels of the educational system. He is clear in his beliefs about the school system—what works, what doesn't work and how to make teaching and learning good for kids. Retirement might be around the corner for Tom but it will not signal the end of his career or his contributions to the educational system. As he says, "I have many irons in the fire!" and there is conviction, excitement and energy in his voice. It doesn't take long to know that Tom is also a man-of-action.

He has been at his present elementary school, located in a middle-upper middle class community in Edmonton since 1998. Having come from an inner city school with multitudinous demands, Tom found this school to be significantly different. On the first day of classes, in his first year, a close colleague phoned to say, "All the kids are in their classes and there's no line up outside my door. What the heck do we do now?" Despite the humor underlying this interaction, Tom knows from experience that each school population has its own demands and this one was no different. Tom's initial task was learning about the culture and community in this particular school. He knew this would help him determine the story he would live as principal and how he could bring his beliefs about teaching and learning to students, staff and parents. In discussing his fundamental beliefs about education, Tom indicates that, for him, everything is about teaching and learning, no matter the situation or the individuals involved—sometimes one plays the role of teacher, sometimes learner, but, according to Tom, we are always positioned somewhere along this continuum with teaching at one end and learning at the other. By living and modeling this philosophy Tom has helped to develop a community where everyone is both a teacher and a learner, sometimes one, sometimes the other. He has nurtured the relationships he has with all members of his school community and respects the strengths each brings. Within an environment of care and respect Tom expects individuals to share their strengths and expertise and to learn, one from the other. **You want to form very loving relationships, loving in the pure sense of the word and you want a learning environment. And a learning environment must be non-threatening and non-judgmental, loving.**

Just as Tom has sought to create such an environment in his school and in his relationships, so he sees mentorship as a learning opportunity that requires and deserves a similar loving, trusting environment in which to flourish. Whether assuming the role of protégé, mentor or co-mentor Tom has focused on developing these kinds of positive and trusting relationships. "**For me it's all about walking the talk.**"

The more time I spend with Tom the more I come to understand how he has woven his basic beliefs about teaching, learning and relationship into all aspects of his life, his interactions, his decisions and his school. It comes up frequently in our conversations and provides a foundation for much of Tom's work as a principal. As we visit classrooms *and walk the halls, Tom demonstrates pride in his school, the staff, students and parents as well as the work they have accomplished. He is a confident and capable individual who takes seriously his responsibility to mentor others as he has been mentored himself. He looks for the good in others, complimenting student work, highlighting particular strengths of his staff and acknowledging the contributions of parents. There is a sense of love and care that emanates from him which has helped to create the non-judgmental and positive learning environment I see in his school. I imagine there is a similar thread running throughout all facets of his life.*

During my visits colleagues phone to check out a decision, ask for advice or set up a meeting time. He has worked with these individuals in the past and the relationships have continued. Tom always picks up the phone or makes himself available. He sees these occurrences as part of ongoing mentorship that he offers to others—helping, supporting, advising, collaborating—as required and as needed and he is happy to respond.

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship: Finding a Mentor

As we reflect on a long and respected career in education and school administration, Tom speaks of his own tenure in the assistant principalship as a time of great learning and opportunity. Encouraged by his principal, he took on a number of new challenges and assumed some risks that he admits he might not be receptive to today, now that he's more experienced and infinitely wiser! However, it was as a result of some of these initial undertakings that he was provided a forum to demonstrate his talents and establish some of the contacts that have been invaluable to him throughout his career. He learned about the culture of the inner city in which he was working and, over time, came to a greater understanding of the politics in his own school jurisdiction as well as in the province.

As Tom explains it, his principal, Burt, was instrumental in getting him involved. He not only encouraged Tom to take on selected projects, he pushed him towards them, seeking ways in which to highlight Tom's skills, opening doors, introducing him to key people and enhancing his career. **[Burt] was more concerned about the politics of the organization--how I should act and who I should be involved with and what committees I should be on and those kinds of things to become known in the district. His mentorship in that area was by far the most valuable in terms of my career advancement. What to do and who to do it with? Who to ask questions of and who to believe?...He was very astute at that stuff...He was a fantastic door opener for me--long term, has been ever since...He was definitely instrumental in moving me through to becoming a principal. In fact, at the school, he asked the Superintendent if he would consider putting me in as a principal when he left and that's what he did.**

Tom's experience in this regard is similar to others whose careers benefit from the mentorship of one who holds a position of influence and connection. These mentors protect, profile, advise and guide their protégés. Their political knowledge and network of friends and colleagues serve to support career advancement. In both his career progression and his own learning, Tom's relationship with Burt has had significant impact, **"...the spin-offs have been immeasurable..."** In keeping with Kram's (1985) review of mentorship, Burt's influence and intervention supported one of the more traditional functions of mentoring—career advancement.

In Tom's case, Burt was instrumental in bringing him into administration as an assistant principal and influencing his move from the assistant principalship to the principalship. However, Tom reinforces that Burt also taught him a great deal about the principal's role in terms of leadership, education and relationships. Very quickly, their working relationship developed into a friendship that would last for many years.

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship: "Learning the Ropes"

In becoming an assistant principal Tom found himself in that unique situation where, as both a teacher and administrator, he stood with one foot in each camp. Positioned within both places he was able to observe and participate in the day-to-day as well as longer term work of the principal while still maintaining a home base in the safe and known environment of the classroom. As he worked alongside this older and more experienced colleague, he came to view him and his work through a different lens. In many ways Burt became a strong and compelling role model for Tom encouraging a level of involvement and collaboration which afforded Tom the opportunity to learn by doing, gradually assuming greater responsibility for the tasks associated with school leadership; eventually coming to see himself as successful in the leadership role. **...when I met Burt it became evident to me that he had a lot to teach me, because he was ten years older, more worldly, had a principalship and all those things and I was his assistant principal. That was our first relationship. And so, I said to myself, stick by this man, you'll learn something. It's pretty obvious that he knows what he's talking about...**

Throughout the next few years Tom had benefit of their shared conversations and reflective interactions as well as the opportunity to watch Burt practice his craft. **This work is all about relationships and it was really powerful to me to watch the relationships that Burt had formed with staff, and then the differences that I had formed because of the knowledge that I had of how they perceived those relationships and how he perceived them…I think that watching him make mistakes was the biggest learning for me…you reflect back…and you think, "Oh yeah, Burt making those mistakes afforded me the opportunity of not making them."**

Still partly positioned in the classroom space Tom experienced the impact of administrative decisions and interactions on teaching and learning and in the lives of teachers themselves—knowledge and insight he still uses as reference points in his leadership practice. During those days he listened well and observed carefully, reflecting on a time when he would not have such easy access to the intimate and personal world of a principal mentor or to the personal experiences of the teacher in the classroom. **"I could keep my eyes open when I was doing the assistant principal thing and I listened to both ends of the story…"**

I suppose, to some extent, Tom's experience also provided the opportunity to learn that principals do make mistakes and he has joked with me several times that Burt used to say to him, "What's the worst that can happen Tom? The worst is you might have to write a letter of apology!" Tom seems to have taken this to heart and he does not strike me as the kind of man who worries about making a mistake or about having to write a letter of apology if he feels it's warranted. His self-confidence is enviable, his manner *relaxed and I imagine Burt played a significant role in helping to support the development of Tom's positive feelings about his skills and abilities.*

During his tenure in the assistant principalship he had many opportunities to "learn the ropes" (Kram, 1985) and to develop his own understanding of school administration. Burt shared his practical knowledge, the wisdom gained from many years in the principalship and Tom learned by doing, reflecting on his own practice and liaising not just with Burt but also with teacher colleagues. His anticipated future was always an aspect of his present moment: How would he function in the principalship? What choices would he make? How would he mediate between the office and the classroom? These were just a few of the questions he posed in coming to a deeper understanding of leadership practice within the context of a school.

Crow and Matthews (1998) refer to the assistant principalship as a time of testing by administrators, teachers, students and parents. Tom shares that it was also a time of testing for himself: testing his abilities; his new learnings; how, as an administrator, he would relate to teachers; and testing his evolving philosophy of and vision for leadership.

I think [Burt] just pushed me out in a little boat into the river and said, "Go for it!"...the faith he had in handing things off to me would have been the most influential because it opened so many doors for me. He had great faith that I could pursue an action and he was willing to let me sink or swim with it so he said, "Just go for it." And so I did and never even thought about it in terms of this is too hard and, reflecting on it now, some of the stuff I did was very hard, very deep learning curves. It was a high level of learning for me...

Throughout the assistant principalship, Burt's influence was significant and Tom began to experience a change in his own self-perceptions; his story of himself was evolving. Moving from classroom teacher he began to align himself more closely with an administrative reference group and to position himself differently on the educational landscape.

> Over time, assistant principals…differentiate themselves from their mentors by incorporating certain features and choosing other unique features. As this process occurs, assistant principals develop a clearer sense of who they are and how they fit into the profession. (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 90)

Burt's ongoing encouragement, guidance and advice supported Tom in a process of socialization that helped him make sense of a new and unfamiliar role and saw him transform from teacher to aspiring administrator and eventually into a confident principal who actively and knowledgably defines and redefines his work as an educational leader.

Reflecting on the Assistant Principalship: Making A Connection

The relationship Tom shared with Burt was not simply one that advanced his career or helped him to 'learn the ropes' of school administration. He and Burt have been friends since their first years of working together—**By January of our first year there was already this spark between us—immediately**— and many years later, Burt continues to influence Tom and his work. The "immediate spark" between the two fostered a relationship that initially supported Tom in becoming a successful assistant and then principal and, eventually, it became a valued friendship. Over the years, they have shared their varying expertise one with the other not just within the educational context but outside as well. Tom's self-confidence in his role as the leader of a school found its roots in the relationship he shared with Burt and I am struck by the strength of his feelings for this man. Tom, an educator of experience, a respected principal from whom colleagues continue to seek guidance and wisdom, candidly and simply says, **Burt is my mentor and my teacher and he always will be…People talk generally about teachers who have made a difference in their lives and often, they'll talk about a grade one teacher, sometimes a grade six teacher, sometimes a junior high teacher, once in a while a Social 20 teacher. They'll talk about these significant educators in their lives and in the teacher-learner context. And I believe personally that I learned more from Burt, in that first year that I knew him than I have learned from all of my teachers in all of the time that they taught me. So, he becomes the teacher that one would talk about. If somebody asks me to talk about a teacher, to describe a teacher, I will describe Burt.**

My Mentor; My Teacher; My Friend: Solidifying a Relationship

…for two years I was mentored by Burt and continued to be mentored by him as a principal because he was always the one I would call and say, Burt, here's the situation, what would you do? Cause you always, there's always a second guess in yourself, in your principalship. Because you are by yourself; you're running solo generally. Even if you have an assistant principal you're running solo. So you always want to phone someone who's been there, been in the trenches and say, 'What would you do?' You might not do the same thing that they suggest but you

might get further insight into it and the scope of the problem especially in your first couple of years of administration. So I used Burt, frankly, for the next five years.

Tom affirms that he continued to value and access Burt's insights, experience and wisdom throughout the years, even as his own knowledge and expertise broadened. Their professional relationship strengthened when, as colleagues, each had his own principalship and, although Burt has since retired, Tom finds that he will still use him as a gauge when a situation is particularly challenging. **You need to know, I still ask myself, what would Burt do? I mean Burt is my mentor, there is no question about that, will always be. So, "What would Burt do?" is what I would say when I have a mad parent, or upset child, or upset staff, or whatever. Because you always get stuff in schools, always.**

Through the months we frequently return to Burt's defining influence. Tom's experience reinforces Crow and Matthews' (1998) observations that, "Principals often hold primary mentors in high regard, thinking of these persons as the ones who gave them the start they needed…The relationship between primary mentors and their protégés may not last a lifetime but the respect and admiration will" (pp. 4-5). The respect and admiration Tom has for Burt are evident as is the love and care he feels for someone who has been an ongoing participant in his life and a man he thinks of as a brother. **So if you have a mentor who has been very special to you it's definitely a loving relationship, no question. And I think as you spend time together it's probably an equal one on both sides. I mean, I think Burt would say he has a loving relationship with me as well. If you asked him, I think he'd say that.**

As I begin to understand the importance Tom places on the role of his mentor in his professional life, I wonder what it is that takes someone to the level of being a "mentor, a teacher and a friend;" someone who remains with you over the course of an entire administrative career. So many years later Tom still values his friendship with Burt and has now become a mentor himself. It is as if he is providing to others the type of support he enjoyed throughout his career—replicating the mentoring experience for other administrators. It must also help minimize the feelings of isolation and/or doubt when there is a trusted colleague/mentor to whom one can turn.

Tom explains what it was that attracted him to Burt and speaks again of the chemistry they shared. **I think his kind of passion was attractive to me. I'm always attracted to people who are passionate about something so that it really runs their lives. I'm always absolutely amazed that people can dedicate their life to a passion…[Because of them] I know what the high bar looks like and I know where I can go in terms of spending time.** He describes Burt as a man of passion not just in his dedication to education but also to social issues and he shares examples of Burt's influence and commitment to a cause, his dramatic stand against the city's move to build a bridge across a natural ravine and his contributions to local service projects. As I come to know Tom better, I see a similar type of passion and focus within him. He is positive and energetic and I imagine he does not do things by halves himself. He is interested in all aspects of the educational system as well as community, social and political issues. It seems to me Tom and Burt must be somewhat alike although Tom is quick to say they are not like-minded. However, it **'clicked'** for them and Tom shares that, in their first year working together as principal and assistant, a staff member called them together and indicated the staff couldn't keep up with their collective enthusiasm and energy! She suggested they needed to slow down or they'd have to take turns coming to school!

Advancing a career; providing opportunities to learn by doing; establishing a high bar; modeling passion and commitment; becoming a friend and enjoying a shared history: these have been aspects of the mentoring relationship shared by Tom and Burt. But Tom also talks about Burt's ability to question, to challenge, to demand and in doing so, encourage Tom to take a more conscious and reflective look at his beliefs, his decisions and his practice—**Burt is good at questions; he cuts to the core…I've had more growth from Burt who would say, "That's [garbage] Tom; don't go there! These are the ones you really learn from.** As Tom says, Burt was always quick to challenge in a clear and direct fashion, no "beating about the bush" or "sugar-coating"! But, because of his obvious faith and trust in Tom and the strength of their relationship, Tom learned to engage in reflective practice, to challenge himself but to have greater faith and confidence in himself. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) add that the development of trust in a relationship is essential for learning to occur. "Talking with a trusted coach, mentor or friend becomes a safety zone within which to more freely explore…Experimenting and practicing new habits require finding safe places and relationships" (p. 162).

The bond between Tom and Burt is strong, involving not just respect but genuine caring. **The same sort of feelings and emotions come out of my pores when I think about Burt and the kind of things that he's taught me because I would never be the administrator I am today without him, just wouldn't be, because I would not have**

taken some of the risks that I have. Burt taught me to take risks and if I knew that it was right, to go for it no matter what.

Over the years the relationship between Tom and Burt has evolved and deepened. They are close friends involving their families in their shared relationship. Their original mentoring relationship has broadened to incorporate other instances, professional, social and personal. They share a now equal relationship and friendship. Tom tells a story of Burt visiting and touring his present school, asking his usual probing questions. As the two men finally sat to reflect on the experience Burt observed, "It just doesn't get any better than this Tom!"

I could sense the feelings of accomplishment that came as a result of one's mentor making such a statement and Tom's face revealed the satisfaction and pleasure he experienced from Burt's acknowledgement of a job well done, the high bar reached! I am envious of the relationship Tom shares with Burt, not because I have not experienced positive mentorship myself but there seems to be a depth of understanding and a maturity to this relationship that has resulted in a lasting friendship and a shared interest in issues of leadership and educational practice. Their openness provides a space to learn and grow without fear of failure. Perhaps it is this I am most envious of and I wonder how we can create such opportunities for others.

Coming Full Circle: Being a Mentor

Now, as an experienced principal, himself, Tom provides mentoring support to others. Several years ago he collaborated with a professor from the University of Alberta and, in conjunction with a graduate program in educational administration, he assumed the role of mentoring principal. Being able to engage in collaborative discussions focused on school management and leadership issues allowed Tom to share his experiences and revisit his philosophical beliefs.

Kram (1985) refers specifically to those in mid-career who have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experiential background and indicates their frequent desire to invest in the development of colleagues is motivated by both instrumental as well as psychological needs. Not only does the success of a protégé reflect well on the mentor but the opportunity to assist another in learning 'the tricks of the trade' allows the mentor to pass on his/her wisdom and insight which generates a sense of "pride, satisfaction and responsibility" and in some ways, a legacy of oneself (p. 89). **...that was really powerful and exciting for me, teaching and training young people. Some of them weren't necessarily young, but were young in the business, helping them make some decisions and setting some criteria in their brains that they would use for decision making at a future date. It was really a good experience I think for everybody.**

Within the context of traditional or "technical mentorship" (Mullen, 2005) the protégé can take advantage of the experience, insight and support of the mentor. On the other hand, the mentor experiences "internal satisfaction, respect for his/her capabilities as teacher and advisor and reviews and reappraises the past by participating in [another's] attempts to face the challenges of early career years" (Kram, 1985, p. 3).

As a mentor, Tom is encouraged to share his experiences and expertise with others. In doing so he contributes to his own growth and development, redefines his role in the organization and supports the educational system by encouraging and nurturing future leaders. "The best school leaders are the ones who develop, nurture and mentor others who will step forward," to become exemplary leaders, lifelong learners and mentors themselves. (Wilmore, 2002, p. 104).

Tom was mentored by Burt and is now a mentor himself. These types of informal and formal links between and among leaders and aspiring leaders provide opportunities to gain and to share the craft knowledge of the profession. University training offers a solid grounding in the theoretical underpinnings of leadership and administration but mentoring can extend this learning by tapping into the qualitative, reflective knowledge principals possess about their craft.

Barth (1990) believes the sharing of craft knowledge by educators is one of the most important interactions available for those who desire to move themselves forward in terms of learning and skill acquisition. He acknowledges, however, that because this type of sharing occurs in dialogue or conversational situations and does not produce 'hard data,' many people do not believe such interactions are legitimate (p. 78). Tom argues against these naysayers by advocating strongly for mentorship that sees school administrators supporting one another in their practice, throughout the life of a career. He fosters these relationships in his own professional life as well as within his school and district communities.

Coaching and Mentoring

Tom has shared stories that focused primarily on his experiences within a more traditional understanding of mentorship—expert to novice. However, during the last few years he has become actively involved in a coaching program offered in his school jurisdiction. All principals are assigned a "coach" with whom they are expected to meet monthly. The focus of their shared discussions is intended to be the primary instructional goal(s) of the school and principals are trained to ask probing and helpful questions that are reflective and that seek to help an individual examine his/her practice. Mullen (2005) refers to peer coaching as "a collegial learning process whereby educators assist other experienced faculty in a reciprocal exchange" (p. 98). Joyce and Showers (1988) indicate that peer coaching serves several key purposes including: "build[ing] communities of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft…develop[ing] the shared language and common understandings necessary for the collegial study of new knowledge and skills…[and] provid[ing] a structure for the follow-up to training that is essential for acquiring new teaching skills and strategies" (p. 84). **It's just a wonderful opportunity to talk to someone who has the same knowledge, skills and attributes that you do. You know it's just wonderful to talk to someone who understands every word that comes out your mouth as you do about education.**

I hear in Tom's voice the positive feelings generated by these experiences and the differences between mentoring and coaching are a conundrum to me. Some people seem to use the terms interchangeably. For others there is a distinct difference. Schon (1987) describes a coach as one who "works at creating and sustaining a process of collaborative inquiry" (p. 296) and I see this as simply one facet of the mentoring experience. I wonder if it is this aspect that is the most significant once individuals have progressed from the stage of novice and their skills become more advanced? I am curious to know how Tom would respond to this conundrum of mine?

Tom actively promotes the coaching experience as a form of co-mentoring that fosters collaborative work, strong interdependent relationships and shared growth. In so many ways he seeks out reciprocal opportunities to learn and share expertise. He is motivated by a desire for collegiality; he admits that, ***It's a lonely business…It's a lonely business so you want to check perceptions as often as you can about things.***

However, it is not just the critical examination of the school's instructional goal(s) that engages his attention when he and his coach and he and the principal he coaches meet. It appears that the opportunity to talk with a colleague who works in a similar environment and who is experiencing (or who has experienced) similar issues, concerns and problems, typically leads to conversations on a wide number of shared topics. **Every principal in our school jurisdiction has a coach and their objective is to come in, and help us be reflective about our practice. Really, that's the end-all and be-all…So that's what I do with [the principal I'm coaching and what my coach does with me]. It's really good having a peer colleague reflect with you…She just asks really good questions and that's really the key about coaching, is asking the questions…It's meant to give ongoing current feedback on our work. So it's powerful in that it carries on in different ways. Do we always stay focused? The answer is, definitely not. We go all kinds of places.**

Tom believes these are valuable experiences for principals but issues of time are frequently cited by leaders as a source of ongoing frustration—insufficient time to engage in professional dialogue given the increasing demands that direct time to managerial tasks and 'administrivia.' By formalizing the coaching process, Tom's jurisdiction has legitimized collaborative relationships between principal colleagues and highlighted the value of the time needed for professional dialogue focused on issues of practice. Participants are provided with training in some of the skills which help to support questioning, inquiry and feedback and that provide a basis for reciprocal learning and reflective practice.

Tom views this process as supportive and constructive and feels he has developed positive and trusting relationships with the other principals with whom he has worked. He does not consider their shared conversations to be idle chatter or wasted time but rather values the opportunity to work together to improve and strengthen administrative practice. Often times in the past these types of in-depth discussions typically occurred between a school principal and a Central Office administrator such as the Superintendent but, as Tom explains, colleagues are now encouraged to develop interdependent relationships and to engage in shared critical inquiry providing both challenge and support to one another.

I share with Tom my conundrum about coaching and mentorship. He indicates that he does not believe there are hard and fast definitions but rather a blurring of lines between many related terms and relationships all of which fit within his general philosophy of 'teaching and learning.' **I would say that it's much more of a continuum of a teaching and learning relationship between two colleagues. So whatever the level of the colleague is, I would suggest to you talking about the job, the positions, the role, the responsibility that you have, with anybody would constitute mentoring because somebody would be the learner…it's all about making meaning and understanding so all those little roles that I've played have been experiences for me and then you add on all the learning experiences you have from workshops or even**

independent learning from reading or unanticipated learning from incidents that occur, good or bad, doesn't matter. It's still learning.

Tom's views align with those expressed by Mullen (2005) who also supports a broader understanding of mentoring as something that can occur throughout a lifetime and need not imply or entail an extended one-on-one mentoring relationship to the exclusion of everything else. Rather, it suggests an "ongoing commitment to seek opportunities for mentoring and being mentored as well as for learning and sharing the value of one's experience" (p. 75).

Mentorship Reimagined

Tom is committed to a philosophy of teaching and learning that views all encounters as an opportunity to either teach or learn and believes that, at any time, an individual can be either the teacher or the learner, changing roles depending on his/her facility with the topic, issue or situation. **I hope you are getting my message that mentoring isn't just an official sort of thing. It's very unofficial in every way…I believe a conversation of any kind between colleagues would be classified in my manual as mentoring. So that could be in a meeting situation, one on one, small group or committee work.** Tom finds, in every encounter, an opportunity to add to or make use of his knowledge and skills. Regardless of the specifics, he believes he is always in the process of becoming a more knowledge, capable and competent educator and leader.

According to Darling (1986) peer mentors can include a wide range of individuals and/or experiences; "one's mentoring mosaic can have great variety and be comprised of a network of secondary mentors: events; situations and circumstances of life; books one reads or crises one faces" (Darling, 1986). Mullen (2005) concurs embracing, "collegial network(s) of multiple mentors and opportunities for growth" (p. 98) as integral components of a mentoring mosaic designed to meet the individual's particular needs at any stage throughout one's career. **We don't get many opportunities Michele to do what you and I are doing right now; to actually discuss our practice and what makes sense and what doesn't. So it's the opportunity that we get. It doesn't matter who's sitting over there, we still have the opportunity to discuss the business, and that will color our future actions with our own staffs regardless of the mindset of that person who walks through the door.**

Tom's comments do not minimize the importance of the relationship he has shared with Burt but instead honor the process and the importance of colleagues supporting one another in the area of leadership practice. Most importantly he reaffirms the possibilities for mentorship throughout one's career regardless of the form it takes.

Relationships that provide a safe environment in which to explore, take risks and enhance personal practice offer hope to practitioners who are seeking to strengthen and enrich their knowledge and skills. For me there is something comforting in the present interest in and support for diverse and multiple mentoring that can occur throughout the course of one's career. The acknowledgement and acceptance of the fact that, regardless of the years of experience, I can still learn and grow through collaborative practice is reassuring and encouraging. Tom's experiences highlight the many times in his career when mentoring has provided him support as well as the opportunity to reflect on and strengthen his leadership practice. His relationship with Burt has fallen within the more *traditional paradigm of mentorship but his ongoing commitment honors lifelong mentoring and the breadth of his experiences supports the notion of a mosaic replete with a range of relationships, activities and learning opportunities.*

In Steve's story which follows, there are echoes of Tom's "teacher; mentor; friend." Both men speak of chemistry and loving relationships which provide the essential foundation for deep and lasting mentorship and Steve challenges me to think beyond the confines of the educational landscape in locating those who have influenced who we are and how we live our lives.

Chapter 7

Steve's Story

Steve's story invites us to consider the various layers that make up and help to define mentorship. On the one hand Steve refers to relationships which facilitate and support the acquisition of those skills necessary for a particular job or position. On the other, he describes those deeply personal relationships, imbued with a special chemistry, that bring two or maybe more people together, engaged in a more intense and long-term commitment to one another. Steve draws our attention to the wisdom of mentors and the opportunity to learn the ethics as well as the practice of our craft as educational leaders.

We Begin

I have known Steve as a colleague, for a rather long time, since I first moved to Alberta in 1975 and began my teaching career in earnest. I know him as a committed teacher and a passionate athlete whose contributions to sports and kids crosses over from the educational to the community setting. I also know Steve as a thoughtful yet fun-loving leader who generates energy and commitment in those he contacts. Over the years he has played a role in many of our district's informal stories and, as a principal, he works hard to cultivate on his own staff the type of traditions and relationships that he, himself, has experienced and valued over the years. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) would suggest leaders such as Steve "who are able team players…draw others into active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort and build spirit and identity. They spend time forging and cementing close relationships beyond mere work obligations" (p. 256). In addition to these qualities, beneath Steve's personable exterior lies a complex and divergent thinker, a witty and intelligent individual and a man with strong philosophical beliefs about education, students, relationships and life.

Steve has continued with the same small urban school district in central Alberta since he began teaching in 1974 and he and his family are active members of the community. A number of Steve's friendships are with former and present colleagues and many of these relationships span several decades and incorporate shared experiences within as well as outside of the school context. Steve's commitment to shared history, cultivated over time, is evident in his experiences and his reflections on mentorship as well as in the relationships he has shared with significant individuals who have influenced his own life and his career.

We have spoken of mentorship in the past and Steve has likened mentors who impact our lives to a "Board of Directors"—those people who ***guard and guide your…life.*** I am interested to learn more from Steve and am pleased that he will be participating in my research study. He is a philosophical individual and I hope I will be able to come to an understanding of his experiences and his thoughts about mentorship. I wonder how our conversations will unfold and how our own shared history will influence the time we will spend together throughout the course of my research.

For our first meeting Steve chooses Friday after school at a local sports club. The timing and location of this meeting seem to reinforce so many aspects of my understanding of Steve. He has a long history with this club and Friday after school has always been a time for teachers in our district to gather, share stories and relax in an atmosphere of camaraderie. We arrive early enough to commandeer a corner table and, as the afternoon fades to early evening, the growing crowd leaves us to our own devices. There are waves of hello and the occasional tossed joke but there is also a respect for two colleagues who are engaged in deeper conversation. I am reminded of all the times when

I have been in similar situations and how my own connections with others and my understandings have grown through time spent listening to and sharing stories in exactly this type of relaxed atmosphere. As a novice researcher I am attentive to the context of our storytelling, mindful of the immediate social situation as well as the cultural context "in which the stories have been experienced, told and retold" (McCormack, 2004, p. 235). Steve captures this feeling when he recollects our days as teachers, **much about what we learned from and about one another was not at school ...it was learned lots of places and it was learned on Fridays after work as much as it was learned Monday to Friday at work...**

Josselson and Lieblich (1993) reminds us of the contextual aspect of relationship noting we must consider aspects "both inside and outside the individual's skin" (p. 147). She cites three levels of influence and advises the researcher to attend to: "the individual; the pair or group that relates as individuals and the context within which this takes place" (p. 147). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) have also underlined the importance of context in thinking about lives of teachers and they use a landscape metaphor as a way to help us frame our understanding of how context shapes our experiences and the stories we tell. They suggest a three-dimensional inquiry narrative space which respects the complexity and multiplicity of the landscape upon which educators live and work and which incorporates, "...temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second, and place along a third" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

Keeping this in mind, I am aware there is much to attend to as I enter Steve's storied landscape. I will be challenged to attend to the past, present and future (temporality); feelings, hopes and dreams as well as environmental influences (personal *and social); in addition to the places where we are and are not positioned. I am enjoying this challenge and am finding myself more consciously aware of the other person with whom I am developing a relationship and the stories and experiences they are choosing to share with me.*

Reflecting on the Principalship

Steve became the principal of his large, overcrowded, single-track junior high school four years ago after having been the Assistant Principal for twelve years and Acting Principal for one. Although he began his teaching career in the same gymnasium he now oversees as principal, during the intervening years he has traveled to a number of the district's schools—elementary, junior and senior high—as teacher, Assistant Principal and Acting Principal. In explaining his feelings about his growth and development in the principalship he likens his progress to that of a painter. **It's sort of like an artist. Everyone starts painting in a realistic [way]. You start with a can or a house or a still. You do all these things and then you get into the realism and you do your nature, your trees, your little cabin by the lake and your birds. Then your Picasso comes later; your abstracts and I think I'm almost into the abstract kind of thinking about everything in administration now. And it's not a pleasant place to be at times because you are abstract. It's not that I need a picture of something now; I just need kind of an image or a representation of it.**

Steve explains, at this point in his career, he has achieved a certain expertise in managing and responding to his role and responsibilities as principal. His references to the stages of career development are supported by a number of researchers (Dreyfus &

Dreyfus, 1986; Crow & Matthews, 1989; Hart, 1993) who depict principal development as following along a continuum of steps or stages generally ranging from Novice through to Proficient and ultimately aspiring to Expert. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) refer to this final stage as a time when individuals have attained such a level of competence they, "generally know what to do based on mature and practiced understanding…An expert's skill has become so much a part of him that he need be no more aware of it than he is of his own body" (p. 30). **It can't be cerebral. If you're thinking about it all the time and going through a checklist, then it's too late anyway. You have to do that at first, everybody does but that's probably why half the things fail, because if you're mentally checking them off then they won't work.**

To the expert, performance is typically second nature although, when time allows or outcomes are critical, reflective practice is a key to maintaining and/or enhancing performance. Steve refers to Wayne Gretzky in suggesting that he aspires to a level of expertise that is 'visceral,' intuitive, that of 'expert.' He observes, **I think mentorship will be absolutely essential to us being able to achieve our goal,** and refers to the type of relationships that foster guided practice, collaboration, reflection, camaraderie and lasting friendships. It is here that Steve believes we can achieve the visceral or, as with his artist's analogy, the abstract.

Steve has had benefit of a number of mentors over the years but, for him, 'true mentoring' does not focus on the practical and technical aspects of how to do a job but rather on ethical and philosophical issues.

Steve talks about the many aspects of leading a school that he enjoys and the sense of challenge and accomplishment he finds in the principalship. However, the *demands he feels seem numerous and their weight is palpable. He is a man who cares deeply, one who reflects often and critically on his practice. He no longer requires support in the management aspects of running a school—those aspects that he refers to as 'realism' in the art of school administration— but clearly there are deeper issues he would choose to reflect on—I imagine this to be the abstract of his work. I wonder how mentoring meets his needs as a principal and a person at this time in his life and career and whether he has the support he requires. As we near the end of our time together he admits that he has probably talked more with me more than anyone else about educational and philosophical issues during this school year and I have a sense that there may be something missing from his support network or factors that are impinging upon his ability to participate fully in those relationships he values.*

A good leader…has to be constantly figuring out where everybody's coming from and why, ahead of them even, to know where you're at, to know how to make the right decisions…Do I worry?...Yup, all the time, all day long, all night long. That's the worst thing is all night long and it consumes me at times…

Steve's references to the weight of responsibility and the associated level of worry that these perceived responsibilities generate may be compounded by the apparent isolation inherent in the role of the principal. While the literature abounds with references to the isolation found within the field of teaching (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Miller, 1990), there appears to be minimal appreciation for the isolation experienced by principals who contend with the reality of "the buck stops here" and who occupy a "singleton" position within a school community. One rationale given for implementing formalized mentoring programs for principals is "grounded in the assumption that the role of the leader is a lonely effort and that having the ability to relate to peers concerning personal and professional concerns is a way to reduce that sense of isolation" (Daresh, 1995, p. 14).

As Steve talks about the position he occupies within his school community, I am reminded of Tom and Sean who commented on the feelings of responsibility and the associated isolation that comes with being a principal. Tom, in particular, found a sense of connectedness in working with a principal colleague "who understands every word that comes out of your mouth." Steve, too, is a man of relationships and acknowledges the importance of reaching out to others and establishing networks in the school, the district and his personal life.

Steve believes that developing connections with others through positive relationships is critical for any leader. His own network of connections is extensive and he devotes considerable time to fostering and nurturing them. He weaves together the professional, the personal and the social with his school staff, as well as past and present colleagues and friends.

Living Underground

Steve and I have been educators since the mid-70's. In our professional lives we have grappled with numerous changes including the evolving demands of the provincial government, the relationship between central and school based administrators and the interplay of expectations between the school, district office, the community and government departments associated with the educational system.

As a principal, Steve sees himself existing on several different levels. He observes that, increasingly, there is a distinct and growing gulf between what he is required to do and what he considers to be the "real" business of running a school. Legislation, policies, practices, accountability standards and myriad district and provincial expectations combined with changing programming demands seem to pay little heed to the knowledge, expertise and experience of teachers and principals. This type of limited vision threatens to distract and derail commitment and energy away from the essential work of teaching and leadership.

Steve refers to the secret and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) that exist within his world as a school principal and within the current reality of his school. **I have that underground feeling, that what we do is underground. What we do above the ground is weird. It's the government and it's what we try to establish. For better or worse we deal with that but to me, everything we really do comes underground …we are caught in a position right now in our province where we're dealing with the above ground items quite hard. That's why I fight programs which are well meaning programs but are all above ground programs.** He includes district sanctioned programs like formalized mentorship programs on his list of "above ground" programs. To him the formalizing of these programs, the mandating of specific skills from 'above,' and the introduction of activities and training sessions designed to provide everyone with a single, common approach, diminishes that which should be natural and which has, in the past, taken root and flourished according to individual need and commitment.

In explaining his thoughts about mentorship he draws a clear distinction between the formal and the informal. Formalized initiatives seem to fall within the framework of "above ground" programming approved and actively supported by external agencies (district offices, Alberta Teachers' Association (A.T.A.), provincial ministries of education) and addressing the practical and pragmatic needs of the organization. The informal and highly personalized relationships he honors and has enjoyed throughout his career, those grounded in trust and developed over time, seem to fall "underground." He explains that these types of meaningful relationships cannot be mandated and, by attempting to create formalized programs, we focus more on the needs of the organization and fail to cultivate those facets that are essential to the creation and development of personally meaningful and authentic relationships.

Steve's references to "living and working underground" (versus 'above ground') remind me of the concept of "secret and cover stories" described by Clandinin and Connelly (1999). In describing the world of the classroom teacher they invite us to consider the lack of congruence between theory and practice experienced by teachers. They refer to the tensions teachers feel when they find themselves simultaneously positioned in the conflicting worlds of the classroom and other professional, communal places. Secret stories convey their lived experiences, stories of practice created behind the classroom doors and in relationships with their students. These are shared with other teachers in secret places that are safe and beyond scrutiny. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) advise that teachers need safe places outside the classroom space to tell and retell these secret stories in order to transform their practice. Cover stories, on the other hand, represent the teacher as expert and tell of experiences deemed appropriate to the classroom space including such things as research and policy. Engaging in this type of rhetoric in communal places serves to protect and support teacher practice and lives as lived in the classroom but does little to transform practice.

In referring to 'above-' and 'under-ground' experiences of administration Steve has framed his life on the school landscape in a similar way. As principal he appears to have his own secret and cover stories and limited safe places in which to talk about that which matters most to him. The close and enduring relationships he has established over the years offer just such safe places and it is here that Steve finds the type of informal and highly personalized mentorship he finds most meaningful.

So often the sort of intense, personalized relationships which develop informally and to which Steve refers are unavailable to all individuals. I wonder if there are ways in which organizations can ever shape their policies and practices so as to facilitate the types of qualities Steve advocates? How can we better construct the safe places where all educators, teachers and administrators alike can, "find others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold and relived in new ways..." (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.13) without having to resort to the secrecy of the classroom? In Steve's case I am not sure where he finds the safe places to share his own secret or underground stories. In some ways I see a similarity in Sean's experience and this is troubling to me.

Relationships: Dancing Around the Edges of Mentoring

It is the end of June, classes are over and Steve and I are meeting in his office for the first time. There is a certain quiet to a school building when it is no longer pulsing with the activity of students and teachers and, in this space, there is often the opportunity to converse with colleagues in ways that are not typically available during the working day. Today Steve is taking advantage of the time and the space to pull together the loose threads of a school year. As the principal, he occupies the same office as when he was the assistant and, even though it is smaller and more modestly furnished than the office next door, it is clearly a room that reflects some of those things that are important to Steve. The bulletin board is crowded with pictures and mementos paying tribute to special events, time spent with students and staff and recognition of the achievements of former members of his school community. There is a book depicting the relationship between fathers and sons, a gift to Steve intended to honor the relationship he shared with his own father and, perched on the corner of his desk, is Mr. Roger's little book of friendly advice and comforting homilies to which Steve sometimes refers in his newsletter messages. Posters, gag gifts from the staff and sporting equipment have been plunked amongst the work-a-day tools of an active principal and it is easy to identify Steve's commitment to tradition, relationships, family-community values and teaching practice. Sitting in his office I am aware that it is filled with many of the artifacts of his career, his favorite pastimes and his relationships with students, staff, colleagues and friends.

Steve has been cleaning out his files—"old stuff," he says, things he'd forgotten he even had! I sense a certain amount of apprehension and anxiety in his voice and in his reflections. His assistant principal is changing schools and he knows he will miss their close and trusting relationship as well as the complimentary style that made them such a strong team. With his school facing a renovation and the advent of a new assistant, Steve knows he will be dealing with a lot of change in the coming year. There will be many different demands placed on him and his support network will be important.

We continue our discussion about relationships and Steve reaffirms his belief that, as an educator, and as a principal, relationships are critical. **So you make it alone so who**

the hell cares? Celebrating by yourself is not fun either so you have to realize that we're all sort of in it together. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) concur. "Increasingly the best of breed lead not by virtue of power alone but by excelling in the art of relationship" (p. 248). He goes on to explain that skilled leaders understand to succeed in important undertakings individuals must work together. He uses the term "resonant" leadership to refer to a style that is attuned to people's feelings. "Relationship management is friendliness with a purpose: moving people in the right direction [and] work[ing] under the assumption that nothing important gets done alone" (p. 51).

The affective side of leadership is echoed by Steve as he talks about the enduring and valued relationships and individuals whom he considers as mentors. Throughout he emphasizes the importance of trust and respect. **As long as I respect a person, it's not style as much as there might be people that I trust more than others just in terms of the way they do their business day to day.** He refers to people such as former teachers, university professors, several principals with whom he has worked, friends and colleagues, the influence they have had on him and the varying ways in which particular individuals have mentored him. He will come to talk about a few specific individuals but there are also a number of others (both within and external to education) whom he includes in terms of providing mentoring experiences. In all cases these relationships have grown from a foundation of trust and respect borne of ongoing, shared experiences and a sense of emotional connectedness. I sense the depth of relationship Steve has experienced throughout his career when he speaks of the **emotional and passionate way that I feel for the relationships that I've had in the district over the years and in my life and how important they were to everything that's real to me.**

He uses the term, "real to me," to describe a process of stripping away superficialities and exposing that which is ethical and moral. The people he holds in high esteem are those who model ethical ways of conducting themselves and they carry out their work in a fashion that Steve respects. They are, as Sergionvanni (1999) has explained, "authentic," demonstrating "integrity, reliability, moral excellence, a sense of purpose, firmness of conviction, steadiness, and unique qualities of style and substance" (p. 17). Steve values the input, support and friendship of these individuals and the trusting relationships that have developed over time. It is to these individuals he has turned for mentorship and it is the trust they share that facilitates the level of safety needed to share his personal experiences, his issues and concerns as well as "secret stories" of a school principal.

> Talking with a trusted coach, mentor or friend becomes a safety zone within which to more freely explore the painful realities of a politicized work setting or to question things that don't make sense… Experimentation and practicing new habits require finding safe places and relationships (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee 2002, p. 162)

In the competitive, fast-paced and highly charged educational milieu of the last decade, school leaders have been expected to continuously improve their skills in order to provide effective and efficient management. For Steve this has resulted in tensions between an above- and under-ground existence. Knowing the "right" answers and making the "right" decisions is expected of leaders (Sergiovanni, 1987). The opportunity to share in a trusting relationship that encourages openness and honesty helps Steve to clarify his needs and to find the support that helps him to make sense of his world and navigate it successfully. **There's no other way to do it than talk to people and to compare ideas**

and to share best practices...You've got to open up your vulnerability. That's the hardest thing probably, where you're hurting, what you can't do, what you need. You've got to talk about your needs and I think everybody needs to understand you've got to help each other a little bit.

This is not the first reference to vulnerability. I have also heard the term used by my other participants and from colleagues. I am aware from my own experiences that acknowledging personal vulnerability is a delicate balancing act. As a leader and an experienced educator with many years of competent performance behind me, it is not easy to place myself in situations where I perceive myself to be vulnerable, uncertain, lacking in skill and expertise. Sometimes this can be seen as a weakness or an inability to perform, a lack of self-confidence or/and skill. There is some comfort in learning that my participants and fellow colleagues also deal with similar questions and feelings. Relationships that provide the safety and security to disclose personal doubt, confusion and/or uncertainty offer opportunities to learn and grow as professionals and as individuals. Mentorship can play a significant role at the administrative level in meeting this need. I hear in Steve's words a reminder of our shared responsibility to support and be present for one another and I am encouraged by this reference to a collective responsibility to work collaboratively and interdependently.

Steve recollects a time in his own district when collaboration and forms of mentoring were prevalent, easier to access. **...what I'm trying to say is that we're just not connected the way we used to be. It's not because we're bigger; it seems to be business. It seems to be everybody's going every which way.**

Perhaps Steve's hesitation about formalizing programs stems in part from his belief that we have a personal responsibility to support one another. As well, he reflects on a time when his district was smaller and education seemed to be less a business, more a family. At that time there seemed to be a greater commitment to authentic interpersonal relationships at every level. I find myself wondering how mentoring can add to the connectedness Steve feels is missing from today's educational context. I am mindful that for Steve, it is not an issue that can or will be rectified by simply and arbitrarily assigning the roles and responsibilities of mentor and protégé to people. Rather, aspects of time, trust and personal chemistry must all be factored into the equation and even then, there is an essence to mentorship that, for him, cannot or perhaps must not be defined.

Mentorship: Resisting Definition

Over time we continue to move closer to describing and defining mentorship. Steve approaches this topic with some reluctance, convinced that by formalizing and studying the process something that is at once profound, intense and highly personal will be trivialized. He refers to Gulliver who, when the "little people" got too close, saw the many imperfections "**... because it was just too big a magnification.**" He jokes as he says, "**I always tell people that I look better from a distance! ...I am not against the language or the use of it or the concept. I am very much promoting it but sometimes I don't want the formality or overuse to cheapen something that is fairly important.**

Steve questions the increasing use of the term, "mentorship" and wonders if it is possible to clearly and precisely define the word and the concept. I too am aware that mentorship seems to mean many different things to many different people. Perhaps this is due to the fact that knowledge is socially constructed. Individuals infuse their experiences with meaning, generating knowledge and understanding through reflection and dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). As Sandler (1995) observes, it is "hard to know how many people actually have had mentors because supportive relationships with friends, colleagues, or bosses may be described as 'personal' relationships rather than as mentoring, especially when women assist women" (p. 105).

I have had my own limited understanding of mentorship but through the research process I am beginning to believe my definition has been far too narrow and one-dimensional. As I continue my work, I feel a sense of excitement generated by the possibilities but I wonder if I in the midst of studying this thing to death... part of the contingent of researchers and practitioners analyzing, monitoring and implementing, attempting to explain, re-create and enhance that which would be best left alone? I am aware this word—mentoring—is much more commonly used now than in days gone by. Until the advent of programming designed for beginning teachers, I rarely had occasion to hear the word being used. Now, "how to" texts and manuals are available by the dozens and people appear to use the term to refer to even those relationships that appear to me to be the most trivial and superficial. However, as I continue to learn from my participants, I am coming to understand that this thing we call mentorship can have many faces. Yet some common threads are beginning to surface. I wonder how Steve would respond to the experiences of my other participants and if some of their stories would resonate with him? He is reluctant to think in terms of definition and yet I believe he has a clear sense of what he believes constitutes mentorship.

He reflects on the use of the word: **I guess the term to me is informal and refers to a very important relationship and that's one of my fears, is when we have a name tag that says "Mentor" or when we have a name tag that says "Protégé" or when we have a name tag that says something, to me it loses some meaning in the translation...**

Despite his reluctance to shine too bright a light on mentorship, Steve suggests that the concept of mentoring relationships **is really what it's been about all along—is people helping people and we're in a people business [but] to define it for me right now or to clarify it... I've been able to see the art as abstract of mentorship. I do not want a painting of a mountain and a cabin and a scarecrow. I don't want a realistic picture of mentorship. I don't want it to become too clear. I like the abstract and I'm able to live in it, in that particular area of it, for quite a long time.**

Steve speaks so passionately about mentorship as it shapes itself to the uniqueness of those who are involved. As we talk he paints a picture of partnerships that have developed naturally, over time and have met needs in a variety of ways, none of which resembles the more structured approach that Steve associates with formalized programs. He speaks of many people—former teachers, professors, principals—all of whom have influenced his life, his perspectives, his choices and how he has come to define himself as a person, an educator and a leader with their support and guidance.

Throughout the literature numerous descriptors and analogies have been applied to the term "mentorship"—guide; teacher; sponsor; challenger; counselor; protector; confidant; primary and secondary mentors; co-mentors; formal and informal mentors; critical friend. (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Zachery, 2000). Perhaps the range of terms is the result of a similar reluctance or unwillingness in others to define the term. Perhaps it refers to a relationship that is too personal or a process that is too complex or too filled with potential to narrow by definition.

In some ways the openness and multiplicity is exciting as it provides a space to create a wide range of relationships designed to help and support personal and professional growth. In other ways it is frustrating and confusing; as a senior administrator, can I ever hope to support a meaningful and effective mentoring process available to all school-based administrators if I cannot capture what it truly is? How will I know if I've achieved it if I can't describe it?

Coming to the Term: Mentorship—Chemistry and Relationship

"Love ya Michele!"… Steve refers to some of his female students who, at the recent track meet, shared their affection for each other. "Love ya Jen!" "Oh, luv ya Patty!" Steve likens the casual misuse of the word "love" to that of "mentorship." For him, the word seems to have become "the flavor of the month," used to depict and describe any one of a number of relationships. **I can go with mentorship that's just learning some stuff from somebody else. That's fine. I never thought of it there; that's just to me mechanical stuff…that's just basic blueprint stuff and you need that; it's important but it has nothing to do with my heart and soul…the only things that are connecting with my heart and soul are going to be much deeper than blueprints.**

Steve speaks of the apprentice/journeyman; teacher/learner type of relationships and acknowledges they are important to the growth and development of individuals as they strengthen and enhance skills and craft. However, for him, this does not completely "fit" with his understanding of mentorship in its purest or truest form. For Steve, true mentorship transcends these other relationships, useful and necessary though they may be. **"I really think that the practical mentorship of the trade is important too but that is totally different from where I'm coming from about mentorship."**

Kram (1985) considers a focus on 'learning the ropes' an important aspect of mentoring. However, she and others (Daresh, 2001) stress that much more than this can be achieved. "…mentoring implies a professional activity and commitment that goes well beyond simply being able to answer questions about 'the way we do things around here'" (Daresh, 2001, p. 21).

Steve seems clear on what is and what is not true mentoring and he does not minimize the need for one over the intensity and passion inherent in the other. **Apprenticeship/journeyman kind of stuff is so vital and, don't get me wrong, that aspect of mentorship to me is day-in, day-out. If we're not doing that, constantly, every day, we're not doing a very good job, especially with the young ones.**

He continues by attempting to explain how he has made sense of "true mentoring." **I think it's chemical or like falling in love or it's something like friends. There has to be some 'je ne sais quoi' to mentorship that is special…so I guess what I'm trying to say is that there has to be some kind of chemistry in a mentorship situation, formal or informal. And that chemistry would have lots of different possibilities whether it's through similar likes and dislikes, subject area, maybe teaching and learning styles to some; two birds of a feather might flock together because that's the way their brains work.** Mullen (2005) acknowledges the role emotion plays in the learning process and refers to 'cognitive love' as an essential ingredient in, "creating strong, ethical relationships" (p. 108).

Secretan (1997) also helps us to understand the influence of chemistry in creating significant mentoring relationships. He suggests that mentoring is one of the essential components of the learning process and that, "When we do something because we love the person for whom we are doing it…exhilaration is the result" (p. 96).

Steve's voice is filled with fondness and personal commitment when he speaks of those individuals who have been his mentors. **Mentorship would be people who actually build, shape and create your character, not who you are maybe but certainly, when I have the big questions, they're the people who help you answer those big questions…to me, mentorship has a far greater impact on one's life...**

And Steve is clear in terms of the impact true mentors have: **I think that true mentors are there in spirit as well as in body. You don't forget them…they're always with you.** He speaks of a music teacher with whom he studied for many years beginning when he was a boy. **That became a greater situation for me and we went in later times to hockey games or to do something else after that and discussed other subjects and then related how we felt about the world and things back to the practice of what we were doing and somehow it ended up enriching the original practice and you're not even talking about it. So there is that extending yourself personally to the mentor and then that works in both directions…There's little bit of magic there…….**

The magic Steve finds in these relationships comes from the opportunity to engage in a deeper connection than that which focuses simply on the work we do—it involves **...coming to understand what makes another person tick.** Steve admits that there's also a lot of fun in getting to know people and coming to a mutual understanding of one another at a very comfortable level, of interaction that opens individuals to exploring more areas with one another.

I am reminded of Steve's comments about vulnerability and I wonder how vulnerability becomes entangled with notions of time and trust. I hear Steve describing relationships that have developed slowly, over time; relationships that are grounded in strong feelings of trust and mutual respect; relationships that expand outwards, beyond the initial focus and activity that initially brings people together. Within this context he has found supportive spaces in which he can reflect on his own practice and be vulnerable and open to new learning. I am beginning to understand the distinctions Steve draws between these types of relationships and those that are created through a more formalized process or those that may be more arbitrarily assigned. However, I am aware that there are possibilities for growth within each. While I may never experience the former, I do see within the latter the potential to develop relationships and address individually identified needs

Steve reflects on a former principal, now a friend, and explains, **That's my definition of a mentor. When you have those deep questions, who are you going to phone? If you really have an issue that's gnawing at you then you've got to ask someone.** The relationship between Steve and Peter began when Steve worked as a teacher on Peter's staff and it has grown over the years. Steve describes the connection he feels and he indicates that Peter is an accepting individual who openly and willingly shares ideas. However, regardless of whether he was the one with greater experience and expertise, he was willing to listen. They worked together in the school setting and were also volunteers on community committees. Through their shared experiences, a trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationship has developed. There is also a chemistry between these two men and Steve explains, with a mischievous grin, "We were bad boys together!" They have continued to share experiences educationally and socially and now, although Peter has been retired for several years, Steve still values his wisdom, his craft knowledge and his commitment to education.

However, it has not been solely within his educational context that Steve has found mentoring. He also refers to his church minister with whom he has come to share a relationship that extends beyond Sunday services. **You know I remember golfing with the minister from my church and he would ask me what kinds of things I liked to do and he was a good person and I enjoyed that kind of relationship with him and so that transcended just a minister and a member of the congregation and was probably a friendship and a mentorship. He would give me some good spiritual guidance in my life and then you put those things away and use them in other places and times in your life.**

Steve's comments harken back to his observations that the influence of a significant mentor can occur in the present moment but there is also impact at future times. Mentorship is not bound by time but leaves imprints that affect us throughout the years. In this way mentoring can play a role throughout one's career and one's life. Each of these significant individuals has a place on Steve's Board of Directors and they represent the people who have been and are critically influential in his life... **I think in terms of imprinting on someone that will never disappear...I think we're a**

composite picture of that imprinting of those most important people in our lives—forever.

In thinking about who we might include around the table of our Board of Directors Steve explains that we might best give consideration to **who to choose from the past and who to choose from the present and maybe you can keep a couple of seats from the future always open.**

The impact of mentoring relationships on our past, present and future affects the ways in which we come to compose our lives. Both Steve and Tom refer to this influence and share stories that give a sense of the temporal flow—an unfolding of lives that captures, within the present moment, that which has occurred in the past. At the same time there is a space left for that which is anticipated in the future. The significant individuals in their past lives still rest within them in the present moment and will be carried along into the future.

In all of Steve's references I notice the interplay between time spent in the more formal 'work' setting—music class, school and church—and time spent together in other activities—sharing experiences and stories, creating a shared history. It seems that it is within this type of context that Steve believes individuals have the opportunity to develop the kind of relationships that may result in mentorship.

As we continue our meetings I have a picture of a mentoring process that takes on many faces and one that can last over the course of a lifetime. I am struck once again by the potential narrowness of formalized programming as we have come to know it, designed generally and simply to address needs in a short and time definite period, most often in the first year or two of one's placement in a new position or at the outset of one's *career. I wonder how many of these relationships extend beyond the formal context and grew into what Steve would consider "true" mentoring.*

Coming to the Term: Authentic Mentoring—"The Oughts and Ought-Nots"

> **...to me it's...a belief in what is right and how to act and what one ought and ought not to be—the ethics of your craft more than the practice of your craft. The practice of your craft is obviously vital too but that would be the realistic picture of painting; that would be the paint-by-numbers. That's easy to do, in a sense. We should all be able to do that and do that well. But I'm dealing with mentorship...on a much different level and to me it's very much about how we treat each other...It's about the heart...it's an emotion that you can finally, unconditionally support one another and there's no hang-up with that...You don't lie; you don't hold your feeling in and that's really hard work with someone who's being like that...your thoughts and your dreams and if you could ever work with someone on that level it's almost a higher plane of unconditional regard for that person.**

Once again I am reminded of the importance of relationship in mentoring and I am interested in Steve's reference to unconditional positive regard. Emphasized in the work of Carl Rogers (1978), positive regard—acceptance, respect and love—was viewed as essential to the fulfillment of an individual's potential. For learning and/or positive growth to occur relationships must be nonjudgmental, supportive and accepting; in other words individuals involved in mentoring relationships must experience the type of unconditional positive regard that, "confirms [their] unchanged acceptability as a person, regardless of the success or failure in the task(s). A mentoring environment must be emotionally safe where the protégé can feel free to try new things without fear of non-retrievable loses" (Kay, 1990, cited in Bey & Holmes, 1994, p. 31).

Steve goes on to discuss a complex combination of unconditional regard, emotional attachment and chemistry that has developed within the mentoring relationships he enjoys. For him mentorship is much more than the collaborative sharing of colleagues. He acknowledges that, in the early stages of a career move there is much to learn about the technical aspects of a job. He refers to this as the practice of a craft or trade, the 'nuts and bolts' of acquiring the right skills.

However, Steve's understanding of what he considers to be real mentoring is grounded in supportive relationships and focused the ethics of one's craft—that which is good and right to do; the 'oughts' and 'ought nots' of moral and principled behavior. **I think that mentorship to me is a total higher level of mutual understanding and desire to be together...It's a desire to share a thought, to share a concept and work through that.** As he reflects on his work in the principalship, Steve stresses the commitment he has to conducting himself in an ethical fashion. **The ultimate goal isn't just getting something; it's how you get there too. I mean in a truly ethical way and that's more important to me now than it used to be...I'm saying, you want to do things in a good way.**

We begin to talk about those individuals who have influenced him, his mentors and "Boards of Directors." They are significant people who have affected his choices, decisions and behaviors, his ways of thinking about himself and his life. **I guess that's just the whole concept of making sure that sometimes the people you line up with can get you places but you've sold your soul to the devil.**

Steve is not a man who fosters relationships in a casual fashion or one who seeks relationships that are usury or superficial. He seems to have invested a great deal of himself in the relationships he has established and those which he values. His commitment to moral leadership and a moral and an ethical way of being is reflected in many of his comments and the stories he shares. His messages in the school's monthly newsletters are grounded in sound advice and old-fashioned virtues—making good decisions; being kind to one another; contributing to the community—small deeds reflecting a selfless concern for others. It is in this context that Steve carries out his duties in the principalship. During one of our meetings he shares his "State of the Union Address" which he refers to as the ramblings of a principal explaining his vision for the school. He had read this to his staff the previous day helping them to consider the ethical aspects of their own work in the classroom and how they align themselves with that which is good and right to do.

Sergiovanni (2005) draws our attention to the issue of ethical practice in his discussion of moral leadership which, "combines management know-how with values and ethics. Leadership practice, as a result, is always concerned with both what is effective and what is good; what works and what makes sense; doing things right and doing right things" (p. 19). The essence of this type of moral purpose in leadership is "a commitment to treat people ethically" and a willingness to, "[act] with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers and society as a whole" (Fullan, 2001, p. 3) It is to this greater purpose and with these bigger issues in mind that Steve sees his 'truest' mentors supporting his growth and development. **Some things are much less specific and hard to pinpoint and you borrow them over and over again to**

test your faith or test your inner fortitude to do the right thing and to constantly reexamine what is right…Mentorship…may not be something you can put your finger on, it may not even be there in a temporal sense until years later when you think about the things that someone has said. It may be a long time after when you appreciate the work that someone's done or how they handled something or how things are done…But, overall in my professional life I really hope that I'm on the right track.

Mentorship Reimagined—Do Mentors Have an Expiry Date?

We are coming to the end of our shared conversations and Steve is pensive. He has been playing golf with some former colleagues—two recently retired principals and a retired Superintendent. They are men with whom Steve has a great deal of shared history; he respects them and sees them as still very involved and committed to education. He refers to them as 'elders' and indicates that, in them, he has found mentorship. He shakes his head as he talks about the wealth of knowledge and expertise we lose when we discount and/or fail to take advantage of individuals such as these men. They have shared their stories of retirement with Steve and he likens their experience to stepping off the train, **"the train has left the station…and I'm kind of waving back at them…it's interesting to know if all you know is really useless or not as you step off the train and the train goes past you."**

He struggles to ascertain why education fails to make greater use of this type of expertise, especially in the realm of mentorship. **I'm just saying maybe we need to be using some of these collective wisdoms beyond their expiry dates. Just because they**

have a shelf date doesn't mean that they can't be useful... I always wondered why we don't use these mentors in our district.

Steve brings forward an interesting consideration: the loss of wisdom as a result of retirement. These friends and former colleagues have significantly influenced his career and mentored him at different times in his life and he is troubled by their stories of being overlooked, no longer valued. Perhaps his views are also influenced by his own stage of life and development as an educator and school administrator? McAdams (1996) suggests that in midlife men and women consider "with greater urgency the problem of construing an appropriate ending for their self-defining life story... What middle-aged and older men and women often want in identity is a way to imagine and tell the ending such that, paradoxically, the story does not really end" (p. 143). This has been referred to as a process of generativity wherein the individual leaves a legacy of his/her life story to enrich the practice of future generations. Mentorship provides an opportunity for individuals to tell and retell their stories and, in doing so, contemplate an ending that makes sense of the whole story.

I am also mindful of Steve's view of mentorship and relationship. Shared history is critically important to him and he depicts these men, friends and former colleagues, as sitting around the table, sharing' war stories' of their own and he wonders if this is what it comes down to. It is this type of setting and these kinds of relationships that Steve values and he seems to struggle with a world that does not honor the knowledge and experiences of these individuals, a world that leaves them to sit around the table, on their own and, to some extent, forgotten. Perhaps Steve feels there is something unethical about our flagrant disregard of those who have simply stepped off the train.

Long time relationships are critically important to Steve and he values his connections with a wide range of colleagues and friends. Leslie, whose story follows, works in a large urban school board and speaks of the many formal and informal resources available to her as a principal. Hers is also a story of relationships located both on and off the school landscape which help to support her practice as a leader. While she does not refer to chemistry and that sense of 'je ne said quoi' in quite the same way that Steve does, she refers to a certain 'spark' that results in a desire to continue in a learning relationship with one of her colleagues.

Chapter 8

Maureen's Story

As a school principal Maureen is content. Her story of mentorship focuses on a mosaic of coaching, collegiality, collaboration, consultation and education. Deliberate, predetermined, focused and practical are characteristics that help define Maureen's approach to professional support, growth and development and within this context she has developed a sense of herself as a competent and capable school leader.

We Begin

My only female participant is Maureen, the principal of a small elementary school in a large urban school district. Located close to a university, it has a diverse multicultural population which Maureen finds interesting and rewarding. She is passionate about her role as a principal and her joy in working with children is evident. Maureen's path to teaching was somewhat circuitous for, although she has been an educator for twenty-four years, as a young adult she did not plan for a career as a teacher. In fact, when she graduated from high school she remembers having no vision for what she wanted to do with her life. She began as a clerk-typist, moved from her home province to live in Eastern Canada for a time, and landed a good job as a secretary to the mortgage manager in a large trust company in Toronto, Ontario. When she became homesick, however, she returned to Edmonton and trained as a telephone operator. At twenty-five she returned to university. **I remember the turning point for me was when somebody said, when I was registering for classes, do you want to be responsible for**

a classroom or do you just want to be responsible for kids within a class? I said, "I want to be responsible for a class."
"Well then you'd better go into education; you'd better get qualified to be a teacher." So that's what I did and I just kept inching away at the courses.

Maureen's children were born during this time—**So I did it the hard way!**—and her husband worked in the north while she and her young family lived on a farm in a small rural community. **I was really isolated and it was hard for me just to be alone with my kids all day and my husband working [in the north]. So it was a long way.** However, once Maureen finally completed her studies, she knew she had made a good choice for herself. She was finally in the right profession. **As soon as I got into the classroom I knew it was the right place.**

Her move to a formalized leadership position also took a lengthier route despite the fact that early on in her teaching career her principal suggested she apply for an administrative position. Although she wasn't ready for such a role at that time, the seed had been planted. **When this little thing about being a principal was first put to me I had never considered it…I never looked at myself as a leader but then I thought, 'Well, maybe I could lead people. Maybe I've got some good ideas but it took me a long time to come to that."** From this point Maureen began to take notice of her leadership skills and, eventually, started to pay closer attention to the formal leaders with whom she worked, contemplating the way they conducted themselves, reflecting on their actions and the ensuing impact on her world in the classroom.

The intervening years were filled with life experiences and defining moments. In the mid-80's Maureen decided to leave her husband and move to Victoria where she'd been accepted into a Masters' program at the university. **I remember all that I did then…I sold my house; I left my job; took a leave for a year. I quit smoking the last day that I worked; it was June 26th. I quit smoking on that day and I did it because it was important to me…And slowly, as that year went on I started to feel better and better and I think I started to realize how badly I had been feeling but I didn't realize how bad I'd had the feeling until I made the break and started to see a different way of being…I could set some goals for myself and achieve them all the way along and I think that's what made me feel like I actually achieved something at the end.**

As I grew to know more about Maureen, I began to see her as a woman who sets and achieves professional goals in a focused and considered fashion and one who demonstrates joy and pleasure in her accomplishments. She has a belief in the basic goodness of others and exudes a similar joy in the accomplishments of those around her. As a school principal she is self-assured and confident in her knowledge and ability. Over the years she has enjoyed the challenges of her work and ensures she is well prepared for the demands placed on her.

At the end of her study year, having successfully completed her graduate work, Maureen returned to Edmonton and her school district, ready to move on. **I really enjoyed my teaching then. [My life] was much more pleasurable for me…I remember I went a few years, four or five years, where I just really enjoyed my**

work, really enjoyed being in the classroom. During these years she had the opportunity to teach all the elementary grade levels but she also found herself revisiting her thoughts about entering administration. She participated in a number of experiences that would help her learn more about the role and responsibilities of the school principal. In a planned and committed fashion, Maureen observed, shadowed and studied leaders within her district focusing her attention on moving towards the principalship. She also involved herself in activities that would identify and strengthen her leadership skills, reinforcing for herself her interest and abilities in leadership as well as her understanding of herself as a leader. Some of these occurred within the educational setting, others through her involvement in outside activities. **I think that is why I was really ecstatic when I was appointed principal; cause that's it. I've achieved my goal. I mean, I've never really looked anywhere else. I don't really want to do anything else as far as work goes. This is what I've wanted; I've wanted this forever. It suits me; it's what I've wanted; I'm going to retire being a principal.**

Beginning a Shared Conversation

Maureen and I meet in her home. She is such a busy person and, as my only female participant, I value her insights and experiences as well as the time she so willingly shares with me. We agree to meet on weekends and I find her openness and attention to my research task supportive and encouraging. Maureen describes herself as very people oriented and sees relating to others as a critically important component of her job. She enjoys challenge and change and seeks opportunities to learn and grow even if that includes differing schools and experiences as well as new relationships. **I look at it**

more as a personal growth experience, moving on to a new location and a chance to meet new people and learn and grow again. And that's what I'm about I guess. During the times we share, she is serious and thoughtful and from our first meeting she is willing to share her experiences, thoughts, observations and stories.

We sit at her kitchen table, overlooking the river valley and I imagine the peace and quiet of this setting offers Maureen respite from the myriad demands of her everyday activities. She speaks often of her passion for music and her involvement in a world-wide singing organization. Maureen's experiences with this group have helped shape her past and present and she talks of the role she hopes the group will play in her future. **...that organization actually has given me a lot of personal growth, a lot of opportunities for personal growth there, just small ones and I'm sure that has also contributed to my work and my self-confidence...Many times I would have quit and had it not been so important to me I probably would because there had been other things in my life where I hadn't had to work and I had quit...But I wasn't going to quit this...I saw things I needed in my life that could contribute to my whole life.**

The experiences Maureen has had with this group have contributed not only to her personal but also her professional growth. She has enjoyed opportunities to gain in self-confidence, determination and leadership skills. She speaks frequently and passionately about her involvement and indicates that, as a result of her relationship with this organization, there have been numerous positive repercussions in every aspect of her life and in her career.

I am reminded of both Tom and Steve's experiences with significant others, outside of the world of education. They too have enjoyed educative experiences which *have had meaningful impact on their leadership practice. There appear to be many places to find mentorship both within and outside of the work environment and many of these experiences weave their way throughout the various facets of our lives.*

I have asked Maureen if she thinks being a woman affected her rise to administration, her relationships with significant others or her access to mentoring opportunities. However, upon reflection, she cannot recollect any times when gender seemed to play a role—either positively or negatively. As she explains, it has never been an issue to her and she does not feel it influenced her career or her ability to access support. There are many people available to her and she has not felt isolated or marginalized. Her principals' group is comprised of women and, as an elementary administrator, there are many other women in similar positions. In a number of ways I have had a similar experience in my own career although I have become increasingly aware that, on a number of occasions, the type of mentorship which has helped me to advance in my career, and the places I have gone and continue to go to seek advice and counsel, have resided within more experienced and influential men. On the other hand, I have tended to find collegial mentorship with both men and women. In thinking about the types of collaborative relationships Maureen refers to and the collegial mentoring from which I have benefited, our experiences appear more closely aligned to the concept of co-mentoring which Mullen (2005b) explains as, " a proactive force that unites the mentor and the mentee or a group of individuals in a reciprocal, mutual exchange that creates a context for the learning relationship" (p. 19). The opportunity to learn and grow within a reciprocal and mutual environment is important to me and I suspect to Maureen as well.

One Saturday morning I arrive and Maureen is hosting a garage sale raising funds for her group. Everything is neatly organized and Maureen's two granddaughters have taken charge under the watchful eye of a fellow choral member. Maureen is inside waiting for me and, as I ring the bell, her small dog greets me with an excited bark. At the same time, one of the little girls rushes in to provide an updated report on the latest dollar tally. She is given a loving hug and encouraged back to her post with a request to give us some quiet time to talk. I imagine Maureen develops similar relationships with her students and is able to establish expected parameters in a kind and loving yet clear fashion. I suspect Maureen manages many aspects of her life in this manner.

We settle into our chairs and Maureen turns her full attention to our conversation.

A Journey to the Principalship: Paying Attention

Maureen begins our first meeting by talking about her journey to the principalship. Rather than reflecting on a particular mentor, she describes a number of learning opportunities and interpersonal relationships that contributed to her growth and development in the area of leadership, prepared her for a principalship and supported her through the past four years. In what appears to have been an organized and focused approach towards developing her potential, Maureen utilized a number of resources and organized opportunities for her own professional growth. She seems to be an individual who believes in accessing the resources that are available to her as she moves towards achieving the goals she sets for herself. **I worked at preparing myself for the principalship. I like to prepare myself for whatever I'm getting into because I want to do a good job and if there's resources available to me and I don't take advantage**

of them I think that's kind of stupid. If it's there it might not be exactly what you hoped for but for sure there's going to be something you can get from it…I like to know, to feel I've pretty much explored all the resources available to me so I know how to be the best I can be at anything. And if I haven't done that then I'm probably not feeling as confident as I would like to feel.

Maureen thinks back to her earlier career during which time she moved to a number of different schools, that allowed her to observe a variety of leadership styles. **I paid attention to the things I thought principals I worked for did well and I paid attention to how they did them and I certainly noticed the ones that didn't do things well. I noticed.** She also applied for a sabbatical leave that would allow her to learn from different principals on the job**…cause I'd learned so much already from those that I worked for that was really valuable and I'd heard good things about some principals and interesting things about others so I just thought I'd go and compare. I think there were about ten or twelve principals I started off with before Christmas. I just went and visited them all and then from that group I narrowed it down to four that I wanted to go and spend more extended time with after Christmas…It was awesome. I very quickly saw what I like and didn't like…I would go at different times of the day so I could see them in different roles and it was really valuable. So I think I learned a lot from that.**

In referencing opportunities such as job shadowing Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) note in, "the simple observation of what [an]other person is doing" leaders can acquire a repertoire of styles which assist them in increasing their effectiveness (p. 92). Barth (1990) explains that, while dialogue and conversation support the transfer of the craft knowledge principals possess, observation, imitation and practice also facilitate and are often initial steps in the process. Almost intuitively Maureen sought practical knowledge about leadership in general and the principalship in particular from those functioning within the role. Through observation and dialogue she began to access the craft knowledge held by those with experience in a specific position.

While she acknowledges that she no longer visits or spends time with any of these principals, she indicates that she sometimes thinks of them or the times when they really impressed her. Over the years she has developed her own leadership style but reflects on the ways in which they influenced her beliefs and how she has made sense of her role as school principal. **I remember one of them, she had a little boy, he was about three or four at the time and she was in a staff meeting and I remember something happened to this little boy and she needed to share that with her staff and she was crying with her staff. And I think of her now whenever a situation like that comes up on my staff, I think about her.**

In the past Maureen was uncomfortable melding her two worlds—the personal and the professional—she acknowledges that this led to some stressful times and strained relationships. But she has developed a more relaxed approach, come to view her personal and professional worlds differently and there seems to be a certain contentment with the way in which the various threads of her life are woven together in a rich and familiar tapestry—work, family, her singing, herself.

Over the next few weeks Maureen will return to the story of this principal and her own reactions to the experience. **I was thinking about my own experience being able to have my family and my work together and she did that. She had her family and**

her work together without hardly an effort so I think I was pretty impressed by that because that was probably at that time something I was having difficulty with.

As Maureen and I continue to spend time together I have a sense that she learns a great deal by paying attention to the actions and decisions of others, assessing what works and what does not and what fits with her style, her philosophy and her situation. She is a thoughtful and self-sufficient individual who seems committed to being the best she can be and I imagine a part of her mind is always thinking about her interactions with others and her practice as a principal.

It was not simply the observation that supported Maureen's growth in leadership skills but also her conscious reflection on what she noticed, what 'fit' with her philosophy and style and what she incorporated into her own practice. "Practicing reflective thinking based on the actions of role models provides valuable insight into leader behavior and allows one to establish a habit recognized as good practice" (Weller and Weller, 2002, p. 39). However, while reflective thinking is more effectively undertaken in relationship and with the help, support and guidance of a mentor(s), Mullen (2005b) suggests that "self-mentoring" is also a viable alternative. "Relationship mentoring can even include autonomous or 'self-mentoring' where learning occurs on one's own or vicariously from seasoned professionals" (p. 21). Maureen seems to have incorporated some aspects of 'self-mentoring' throughout her years in the classroom. She speaks of watching principals with whom she worked, identifying those characteristics she admired and sought to integrate into her own practice and those which she felt were unsuccessful or which went against the principles she wished to model. She reports having worked with a large number of different administrators and is able to clearly articulate those qualities and styles which she admired and those she did not. While she did not feel ready to pursue administration when it was first mentioned to her, she was already beginning to shape an image of the kind of leader she would like to be. Conscious observation of the practice of others coupled with self-reflection resulted in the type of self-mentoring referred to by Mullen (2005b) and which Maureen, as a self-sufficient and busy individual preferred.

A Journey to the Principalship: Professional Development Opportunities

During the short time Maureen served as an Assistant Principal, she also participated in a twenty-week leadership course sponsored by her school district and designed for individuals interested in assuming the position of principal. Guided by two experienced principals, Maureen's group of educators learned about a wide range of administrative tasks and duties. These individuals became a close collaborative group as the two experienced principals mentored them throughout the weeks. **And the two principals who worked with us, they were mentoring us along the way...it was awesome. I don't know what we would have done without that because all this is coming at you; it's all new and you don't know anything about it...Looking back on it, I got a big binder of stuff I never look at. I also got a big binder from the ten week program** (a district program designed for teachers interested in leadership issues not specifically the principalship. Maureen also completed this course before assuming the assistant principalship) **and I've never looked at it again...I'm not sure what that's about. It seemed very valuable at the time. I think mostly I was just soaking up information there.**

I would like to know about the program especially those aspects that were so valuable to Maureen. She indicates she has never referred back to the binder of material and I wonder if this is true for a great deal of the professional development activities in which educators engage. Perhaps it is simply the opportunity to share with colleagues that is meaningful. Perhaps it is the opportunity to hear our own thoughts, to use others as a sounding board and to engage in personal and collaborative reflection and critical thinking directed at educational practice. Schon (1987) suggests that it is through professional conversations with colleagues that we come to a better understanding of ourselves and how we define ourselves within a certain role. I imagine the relationships Maureen has established have offered a type of support system and/or safety net that provides a feeling of security should problems arise, a collective of trusted friends or 'comrades-in-arms' who share similar experiences and who listen to Maureen's stories of practice. For Maureen it was these relationships and the opportunity to listen and learn one from the other that was valuable. Maureen still considers many of her 'student' colleagues close connections and I know in my own experiences, those colleagues with whom I have a shared history, provide a certain comfort level and offer me a safe place to talk about issues, concerns, challenges and/or celebrations.

Maureen acknowledges that it was not so much the content of the program that has remained with her but instead it is the relationships with her colleagues. **I would say I'm more connected to those people because we were all appointed first year principals at the same time and many of us are in the same support group [now that we are principals].**

Again I hear the reference to relationship. It is becoming a connecting thread between and among my participants and I am increasingly aware of how significant relational issues are to mentorship. Both Steve and Tom have spoken of chemistry and love and I am curious to learn more about Maureen's perspective on this.

A Mosaic of Support

Eight months into her Assistant Principalship Maureen was asked to take over the school where she still remains as principal, a small elementary with a wide range of ethnically diverse students. In the first year she was assigned a formal mentor but did not have the occasion to make much use of this support. She reports the program seems to work very well for some individuals but there are few requirements for these relationships and meetings are, for the most part, left to the participants to arrange as needed. **I've never been somebody who's latched on to somebody else as far as work things go. I'm pretty self-sufficient. I don't mind collaborating; I love to collaborate on projects and stuff like that but as far as needing somebody every step of the way kind of thing, I don't have enough time for it. I'm too busy doing it.**

In her case the relationship with her mentor was pleasant and friendly but there were few meaningful, practical activities in which to engage or issues with which to deal. **...somehow we never got together all that much. I never really needed her. I never really found I needed her to solve problems. A lot of the stuff I just would really have to search my soul a lot and the right way would surface and I would know what to do and I would do it.** As a result of the work she undertook to prepare herself for the principalship—university training; job shadowing; professional development; self-reflection—she did not feel a need for the guidance or support of a formal, traditional style mentor during her first years as a school principal. **....whatever mentoring was going to take place had already happened, had happened in the courses that I took or the principals I had already worked for.**

Instead, Maureen created a network of supports and mentoring-type resources. She purchased and continues to purchase a consulting service from her district. This provides her access to a small group of former principals who help her solve the problems she brings to them or who act as a sounding board for issues and concerns she is dealing with. **It's good insurance against stuff that can happen when you're a principal. So whenever I've got a really big problem and I don't know what to do, I just phone and I get somebody to talk to about it.** With this type of support from experienced colleagues Maureen can access the specific input and counsel she is seeking without having to invest additional time in developing a more personalized relationship. It is practical and focused advice which she can use as she sees best. This aligns well with the managerial style and approach Maureen uses to attend to the technical tasks of school administration—parent concerns, legal issues, grievances and appeals.

Maureen is also part of a principal support group, her district's built-in opportunity for principals in her region to meet monthly and pursue a principal-driven agenda. Her group also organizes a yearly retreat which allows principals the opportunity to spend extended time together **...it was great. It really bonded us and if you've got a problem you can bring it there and you can talk about it there. And everybody shares different ideas about stuff and I learn stuff there that I don't learn anywhere else.**

In addition, Maureen has also developed a network of several principals in her area to whom she can turn for advice should she need it, whether through an e-mail or telephone call. **If it relates to a particular principal and I know they have expertise in a particular area then I'll give them a call…It really depends on the nature of the problem.**

Maureen reveals that she has never felt isolated in the principalship and, as I learn of the various supports which she can and does access, I begin to understand that there are a number of possibilities available to her: her support group members; her own network of selected colleagues; principals from her twenty-week program; former principal colleagues; her contracted leadership services. **I might not necessarily go with anything those people say but it gives me another opinion and it helps me to solidify my own thinking about it. And maybe if I have two or three different opinions I might piece my own opinion together. So there's lots of support and you know, when I was in the twenty-week program, we all used to say, 'Wow! All you need to do is ask somebody." They used to say, 'If you don't ask somebody when you're a first year principal, if you don't ask for help, you will not be successful. You need to ask for help.' And you know, that never used to be the mentality for principals. It used to be, 'You should go into this knowing everything. You should not have to ask anything and if you do ask, you're a weak principal.' Well, that's not the mentality they have anymore and Thank God, I say…because it's so important to get help from somebody, especially in this line of work.**

While Maureen has referred to first year principals in particular, she also emphasizes a similar need for principals at all stages of their careers. This reflects her *own interest in and commitment to ongoing learning and professional growth. I find in Maureen's story the challenge to broaden and deepen my own understanding even further. She has gathered about herself a mosaic of mentoring possibilities offered by a number of differing people, some whom she knows well and with whom she has shared common experiences. Others whom she does not know as well but they also have experiences and expertise to share with her. Through her interactions with these individuals she can seek advice and guidance, garner support and encouragement; or find insight and further learning. Mullen (2005) explains that a mentoring mosaic "constitutes a decentralizing of traditional mentorship and power-based relationships into power-sharing arenas...[and that] multiple mentors offer numerous resources and ways of learning" (p. 83). While Maureen may not use the term 'mentoring,' I see many relationships that focus on supporting the development of her skills and knowledge and many spaces where she can tell and retell her story of the principalship.*

Adding a Coach

The concept of coaching is far from new although, typically, we tend to think of coaching within the context of athletes who turn to experts for help in improving their performance. Increasingly, however, recent literature (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000; Argryis & Schon, 1978) has embraced coaching as a method to assist employees improve their practice. Similar to Tom's situation, Maureen's school jurisdiction has implemented coaching for all principals. This initiative sees principal pairings share their work and engage in conversations focused on professional development. Training in questioning technique and coaching practice was made available and is intended to develop skills and ensure meaningful engagement in the area of each school's instructional focus. Underlying such a process is the belief that professional relationships between colleagues focused on issues of practice and experience, can serve to enhance leadership. Through a process of observation, inquiry, dialogue and discovery principals have access to meaningful feedback and collegial input. Coaching in this context is intended to provide for skill development (knowledge, skills, abilities and perspectives of effective leadership); performance enhancement (competencies and characteristics that contribute to one's present role and responsibilities); personal and/or professional development (competence and character for a future duties and responsibilities); and/or organizational issues or concerns (Witherspoon, 2000).

I think it's really important to get other people's opinions about stuff…I mean, lots of times you know the right thing to do and you figure it out yourself, but it's really important to ask for the assistance. Maureen frequently comments on her willingness and desire to make good use of the resources available to her and she finds comfort and confidence in the multiple opportunities to access help, support and mentorship that are available in her district. Her coach is one of these. **She comes to me once a month…we have goals that I set for each time…related to [my school's] instructional focus…it gives us a place to focus our conversation when she comes. I find every time she comes I learn lots from her and we share a lot of information back and forth and we get off on lots of different tangents but it's just having that time blocked when she comes is really good…just to chat to another principal is a really good thing and you have all kinds of questions that you didn't realize you had**

before she came and she of me as well. I think the relationship we've established throughout the year has been awesome. It's been very good.

Lyons (2000) has observed that coaching, which draws on many related fields such as counseling and consulting is closely related to mentoring. He points out, however, that their difference lies in the fact that mentors have typically been successful in a role similar to that of the colleague(s) with whom they are in relationship. As a result, coaching may involve much more process than content whereas mentoring generally involves both. He does emphasize though that a good mentor frequently demonstrates the skills needed to be a good coach. In Maureen's situation her coach is also an experienced and active principal, responsible for a school with a demographic similar to Maureen's and she frequently incorporates aspects of her work and experience into their shared conversations. Their identified task is to discuss, reflect upon and grapple with issues related to their leadership practice and the instructional focus of Maureen's school. In this way they seem to function more as co-mentors than coach and client. They share their experiences and expertise in a reciprocal, professionally equal, teaching and learning relationship (Mullen, 2005).

This formalized 'coaching' program which requires mandatory participation from all principals, sees Maureen meeting with her coach on a monthly basis and then providing coaching herself to yet another principal. These networks of coaching principals have schools located within close proximity of each other and therefore often find their issues and concerns related in some way. This, combined with the opportunity to spend time together, has contributed to the development of trusting and supportive relationships amongst colleagues. **You know, if you're going to develop a relationship**

you need to spend time with somebody just sitting one on one, sort of like we are. And you don't get the time to do that during the course of an instructional day at school unless you have the time blocked. And so the district has made us make the time and it's very valuable.

As we first explore Maureen's experiences of coaching she is clear that she does not consider it to be a form of mentoring. She sees mentorship falling within its more commonly understood paradigm of expert to novice. In her present situation coaching partnerships are not formed hierarchically between individuals with more or less experience and expertise but rather between colleagues of equal standing who may have differing backgrounds but who find themselves more or less similarly positioned on the educational landscape. Within this model, principals are encouraged to engage in positive and proactive relationships designed to enhance professional knowledge and learning. According to Maureen, these interconnected coaching partnerships found throughout her district, are creating a "synergy" or "bond that may have a lasting effect on one's attitudes, values and work habits" (Mullen, 2005, p. 23). Maureen recollects a time when she had a grievance filed against her for a very small incident. It was a new experience and she was uncertain in terms of what to expect and how to properly proceed. She shared the story with her coach, identifying her concerns and reviewing her questions. Having experienced the grievance process herself she was able to assist Maureen in placing her situation within a broader context and examining various ways in which to deal with it. In fact, in learning about her coach's experience and through their shared discussion Maureen was able to add to her own knowledge base. **So she's been involved**

in some neat things that I find quite intriguing...paving the road for [my own] future I'm sure.

Maureen and her present coach have established a particularly strong relationship; as Maureen explains, they have "clicked" and as a result there is a level of trust and openness in working together that supports their shared growth and development as school leaders. **I'm most comfortable with her and we've already developed a rapport so...we're going to try and request to stay the same even though she's moving out of my area...I think she and I somehow clicked and I'm not sure what it is that's made us click. We've had some similar experiences...she just seems to share things with me on a level that I'm comfortable with and vice versa. She doesn't ramble on. I have trouble with people who ramble on and on...I've never really been a word person or a talker...so when we're actually speaking to each other it's like we're down to some basic stuff that we're actually interested in so I guess it's just an interest level. We're both interested in what the other has to say.**

I hear again a reference to chemistry or spark—this time it is "a click." Maureen acknowledges she and her coach share a similar style and philosophy and she agrees they will probably continue to meet even if they are not reassigned to each other next year. Regardless, Maureen reaffirms her commitment to the collaborative process in strengthening her practice. She admits, while she and her partner would like to remain together, a change would provide her with another way of examining critical issues and another colleague to add to her support network.

Everyone has a new way, a different way of looking at the principalship and we all have different strengths, different areas where we can grow so I don't think it

would be a bad thing to be hooked up with somebody that I haven't been hooked up with before and maybe that's a good rationale for having people change coaches, so you learn new and different things. This seems to align with Maureen's perspective on accessing all the resources available to her. While she enjoys the relationships she develops with others, she is not hesitant in facing change. **...part of the value, maybe, in switching coaches every year is just seeing a different perspective and you get an opportunity to share in a different way with somebody else.**

Mentorship Reimagined

We have returned to the topic of mentoring and whether coaching might be considered a form of mentorship. We have talked about co-mentoring and how the literature helps us to reimagine mentorship and contemplate a new understanding through the act of co-mentoring. Of particular significance to this discussion was Mullen's reconsideration of traditional mentoring:

> We view mentoring, regardless of context, as a relationship of shared roles and responsibilities. In [some] cases mentoring is presented as a collaborative enterprise in which distinctions between teacher and learner, expert and novice, become entangled or even indistinguishable. At such time, people become engaged or engulfed in a comentoring situation wherein their mutual learning becomes vital. Formal distinctions between mentor and protégé can altogether dissolve. This process involves reciprocal learning and synergistic interchanges that, in themselves, reflect new directions for mentoring. (Mullen, 1999, p. 20)

The reference to and examination of "new directions" begins to reveal the multiple ways in which we may think about, define and compose mentoring experiences and relationships.

Upon reflection Maureen indicates that the coaching she has experienced might well be considered a type of co-mentoring **…both my coach and I and the lady I'm coaching, we have the same job essentially, different community, different area, different locale of course and I've learned that each individual, each job, each principalship is unique and you're never going to have the same one twice, which is rather interesting to me. That we could all have the same job but in fact be doing two different things in different locations but we do come at it from equal footing, same position, and because we're in a unique situation and a unique locale we're being exposed to different things and we're having different experiences. So to share those back and forth is very valuable; just to hear what somebody else is going through and for them to hear yours certainly helps you think about different things that may happen to you down the road and would prepare you for that…I would definitely see that as a co-mentoring thing.**

In addition to providing support, sharing best practices and insights into many of the aspects of the principalship, I wonder aloud if the process has changed the way Maureen talks and interacts as a principal. **I think it has. I think I talk more about things I see in a particular teacher's classroom and how that could be shared by others particularly if I see something good and how it relates to our best practices in our school. I have these little conversations with teachers in our school all the time about things that they are doing in their class and why they are doing it and how**

they can share that with someone else—I plant these seeds here and there and I never used to do that…I wasn't really aware that was part of my job when I first became a principal. I was just so busy taking care of the nitty-gritty and getting to know my way around and getting to know how everybody else ticked…

Maureen sees that the connections she has made have allowed her an opportunity to view what is happening in other schools and the ways in which other staffs are approaching their work with students. In this way, through observation, dialogue and reflection, she continues to add to her knowledge and understanding of the principalship and how she has composed her life within the role of educational leader. Not only have these experiences supported her growth as a principal but she is also providing similar opportunities for her staff to make meaningful connections with colleagues, opening a space for visitations and the sharing of expertise between and among teachers. **…the inter-visitation is becoming more important at my school and teachers are becoming more interested in it, in going to other schools and observing other information and that is a valuable thing too for them to be in.**

Upon reflection Maureen sums up her thoughts, **I guess I would see many different kinds of mentoring. When I first thought of mentoring it was a more experienced person and a less experienced person…then there's also, I would say, a colleague, two colleagues coming together and sharing information like two principals in a coaching situation or two teachers in an inter-visitation situation, certainly very valuable.** Maureen also begins to imagine other possibilities for mentorship. She and her coach, along with the principal Maureen coaches and the individual she coaches agreed to meet for lunch at the end of the school year to spend time sharing their experiences. Maureen feels there is great potential in a small group of principals spending time together. **I can see real value in having groups of principals, like four or five, come together to share experiences for half a day as opposed to having just two principals meet. I never thought of that before but I can see real value in that.**

Chapter 9

Deepening Our Understanding of the Mentoring Experience

This study sought to explore four principals' experiences of mentoring through the stories they shared, over time, with the researcher. Chapter 9 examines some of the shared threads that have taken shape over the course of many months, in conversation and exploration with the participants and through the process of reading, rereading, reflecting and struggling with transcripts, field notes and research text. *Finding a way to define mentorship or providing greater clarity in terms of a common understanding was my most significant challenge. As my participants and I worked together, it became increasingly clear that there must be support for a reimagined and multi-faceted understanding of mentorship; one which removes it from its static and stagnant position clutched in the fist of a centuries old paradigm of hierarchy, exclusivity and maintenance of the status quo.*

As I continued on this journey, the relational quality of mentorship was reaffirmed again and again. I heard stories celebrating the trust shared between and among committed individuals and learned how important trust is in creating an atmosphere in which personal and professional growth and development are nurtured and enhanced.

Finally, I came to realize that mentorship has continued to play an ongoing role in the identity formation of these four individuals. How they have come to compose their lives and 'see' and 'think' of themselves as principals has been influenced by the mentoring experiences they have had. In this way, among others, their mentoring relationships have served to shape and define their leadership practice.

Narrative Threads

"One purpose of narrative research is to have other readers raise questions about their practices, their ways of knowing" (Clandinin & Connelly, in Schon, 1991, p. 277). In this way the shared telling and retelling of stories facilitates increased insight which, upon reflection and further questioning, can add to our collaborative knowledge about our practices as educators and our ways of knowing about ourselves, each other and our work. It would be very tempting, at this stage of the work, to offer generalizations about mentorship and recommendations for possible programs however, that would assume the work was completed, the discussion ended and the 'results' generalizable. This is, of course, far from the case. The purpose of a narrative inquiry is to "suggest that in the ending of the book there is a beginning that leads forward into the next conversation" one in which we continue to ask questions about our practices and our ways of knowing (Clandinin & Connelly, in Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 233).

In my own telling and retelling, reading and re-reading of the stories included in this dissertation I have sought to disentangle the shared threads and resonating stories that would help me make sense of, and gain greater insight into, the mentoring experiences of Tom, Sean, Maureen and Steve. I invite the reader to enter into the conversation and to reflect upon the underlying threads of expanding definitions; identity formation; trusting relationships and impacting leadership practice as they have evidenced themselves throughout the mentoring experiences of these four principals.

Laying Down the First Thread: Finding Definition

I began this research journey hoping to discover a more definitive definition of mentorship and a greater understanding of its role in the lives of administrators. From a very practical perspective I hoped to use my increasing knowledge to support the development of an effective formalized mentoring program for school administrators in my own jurisdiction. I had reflected little on the concept other than to think of it as an influential, and most often informal, connection between two individuals—an expert in a field and an identified novice. In these situations the former typically passes on expertise and wisdom and/or assists in the process of assimilating into the culture of the organization. My initial understanding limited the process to one-on-one, face-to-face pairings positioned within a more-or-less hierarchical structure.

Although some of these aspects were apparent in the experiences of those who participated in this study, through their stories I came to realize there could be many more facets to mentorship; the almost infinite patterns it can assume; and the differing ways in which these relationships can serve individuals at different points in their careers. I have also come to wonder about the ways in which personal stories and understandings of mentorship may be embedded within the cultural and historical narratives of organizations and school jurisdictions. I now realize I have begun a journey in which there are many stops along the way; the answers to one question simply lay the foundation for another. But, it is through story that I will continue to explore the lived experiences of educational leaders and the role of mentoring within that context. In shining a light on the storied lives of Maureen, Tom, Sean and Steve as well as my own, I now see mentorship as having the potential to become a fluid and responsive concept, shifting and changing to meet the personal and professional needs of participants, individually and collectively. Such a process can and must be inclusive, reciprocal, evolutionary and lifelong.

There appear to be many layers that comprise the wholeness of mentorship. Some years ago, Kram (1985) reported that mentoring fulfills two primary functions: (i) career enhancement which can "provid(e) sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments and activities which directly relate to the protégé's career advancement" (p. 2). As well, (ii) psychosocial development which involves, " providing role modeling, acceptance, confirmation, counseling and friendship-- activities that influence the protégé's self-image and competence" (p. 2).

The stories and experiences recorded in this dissertation reflect and honor the importance of these more commonly understood aspects of mentorship…

Mentorship (men t?r ship) *n.* **1.** Career Functions: Advancement

"I had support from the right places to get the principalship."

> **"He was a good door-opener for me."**
>
> **"I may have been in the 'right place at the right time' but part of that was connecting with the right people, in the right place, at the right time. They saw something in me and knew I could and should be in administration and they helped me achieve that goal."**

"He pushed me very quickly with things, very fast and very far up."

Mentorship **(men t?r ship)** ***n.*** 2. Psychosocial Functions: Learning the ropes: competence; identity; effectiveness

"Beginning principals need specific kinds of help."

"To begin with I was just soaking up information."

"The mechanics are very important in the first couple of years."

"Not only do you feel isolation, you also feel very unsure of what you're doing."

"Where do we go when we're stumped?"

"Right now I'm just surviving; I'm just keeping my head above the water in a professional sense. Things are going really well but one big wave could dump the whole bloody tub and I don't like that feeling. I don't like the risk. But I don't feel very connected to anyone."

"I need to be able to ask, 'What would you do in this situation?'"

"In the early years I needed someone with more experience who helped to guide me because I didn't know what I didn't know but, over time, that began to change."

However, these same stories and experiences also encourage us to look beyond a definition that limits our thinking to the early years of an individual's career and/or the pairing of an 'expert' and a 'novice.'

Mentorship (men t?r ship) *n.* **3.** Personal and Professional Connections, Growth and Development

"I want and need to feel connected to something bigger; it helps give purpose to my role in education. I have to know I'm making a contribution that counts and makes a difference."

"I want to be the best that I can be and I need to keep learning and growing. I can never be satisfied that I have arrived."

"It's about people helping people"

"I think we all need to be reaffirmed; I need to be reaffirmed"

"I come away with a sense that I'm not in this alone."

"I would spend time learning the craft and the skills and learning what one ought and what one ought not do and how to carry yourself and I guess if you spend 20 years doing that you come as a protégé and somehow you exit as a mentor with something to offer others."

As well, some of the more recent literature (Mullen, 2005a; Mullen, 2005b; Mullen & Lick, 1999) invite us to engage in a conversation that broadens the range of possibilities and accepts a more multi-layered understanding of mentorship. A number of years ago, Kram (1985) suggested that mentorship was a concept which had not been clearly understood thereby making a definitive definition elusive, open to further negotiation and individual interpretation. As Kram began her own examination of the topic, she found it more practical and useful to create a very simple framework: "…it became apparent that the word *mentor* had a variety of connotations, and that from a research point of view it would be best not to use it. This decision allowed the more general concept of developmental relationships to become the focus of the inquiry" (p. 4). Mullen (2005) reaffirmed this understanding and defined mentorship simply, as "an educational process focused on teaching and learning…" (p. 1). "Developmental relationships"; "An educational process focused on teaching and learning": these are definitions that invite inclusivity and multiplicity, that create a strong foundation on which to build a diverse mentoring mosaic.

In their original tellings Maureen, Sean, Tom and Steve shared stories of career advancement and the enhancement of competence and effectiveness. Many of these experiences occurred in the early years of their administrative careers—coming to the principalship and their initial term in within the principalship. They learned a great deal, felt supported and nurtured, part of a greater whole. However, in their reimaginings of mentorship they all spoke of their continuing desire to be part of collegial relationships—educational experiences focused on teaching and learning and how these connect with issues of leadership. They envisioned a wide range of contexts, primarily collaborative;

within and across job-alike groupings; sometimes as learners, sometimes as teachers; always as active participants. Their needs have evolved and continue to do so but their desire to learn seems as strong as it has ever been. Initially, their understanding of the term, 'mentorship' seemed as unclear as my own and yet, as we continued to dialogue together, to examine the possibilities and our own experiences, we began to embrace those perspectives that honored diversity of need and personal positioning on the educational landscape whether it be at the outset of a career or further along the road. There still seemed to be an acknowledgement of that 'someone special' but only as one possibility within a range of other caring and trusted individuals and within a context that honors and affirms the efficacy and value of a mentoring mosaic.

There may be no one right or single way to mentor or be mentored. Every relationship, real or desired, must be as unique as the individuals who are involved. However, it is important that each relationship be provided with the opportunity and support to discover its own path, in its own way. While many views of mentorship appear rooted in the more traditional paradigm of power and hierarchy, the desire for a new paradigm based on mutuality of learning, across a career, is becoming increasingly prevalent. When all partners are provided with an opportunity to assume responsibility for building and sustaining the relationship, mentorship will have the opportunity to shift from that which is static to that which is equal, inclusive and evolutionary.

Mullen (2005) refers to alternative mentoring and challenges us to consider multiple possibilities, responsive to the stages and developmental needs of all individuals: (i) collaborative mentoring which offers "a countercultural, democratic approach to entrenched exclusivity that mobilizes social equity; (ii) comentorship which invites, "an individual or groups to proactively engage in reciprocal teaching and learning"; and finally, (iii) lifelong mentoring that encourages a process that "continually seeks, finds and reconstructs mentoring and co mentoring relationships" (pp. 24, 25).

Daresh (2001) also envisions an "ongoing process" (p. 3) and Thomas and Higgins (2001) speak of "networks of developmental relationships which…over time, help individuals develop a sense of what they value, believe and are good at" (p. 272). Similarly, Crow and Matthews (1998) reaffirm that mentoring dynamic school leaders involves "more than a single mentor, more than a single setting and more than just rookie protégés" (p. 2). Finally, the voices of Maureen, Sean, Tom and Steve as reflected in their stories and experiences acknowledge the desire for mentoring relationships throughout one's career:

Mentorship (men t?r ship) *n*. **4.** An Ongoing Process—Spanning an entire career; lifelong mentorship

"Not just new but seasoned veteran principals need to be part of a professional dialogue."

"I don't see any admin in our district saying, "I know it all."

"We provide the support to one another; we push the envelop with one another…it helps us grow and lets the people in the field do the training and the teaching and learning together."

"We don't get many opportunities to do what we're doing here…to actually discuss our practice and what makes sense and what doesn't. We have to have opportunities to discuss and that will color our future actions."

"It's a continuum of relationships between colleagues."

'Developmental relationships'; 'An educational process focused on teaching and learning'—coaching, advising, supporting, guiding, protecting, collaborating, challenging, befriending, confiding—the multiplicity of terms and possible definitions associated with the role and function of mentorship helps us to think about the possibilities that are available. However, we might be best advised to consider these terms as necessary parts of a greater whole. Each adds something unique to the essential richness and depth of the mentoring relationship whether it is shared between two or a number of people. When we suggest that mentorship can provide one or the other of these 'services', we begin to engage in a reductive process that threatens to minimize the fullness of the mentoring process at its best. Steve reflected on this very concern when he observed, **I hate to lock it into a definition; it's too important a process.**

However, while mentoring alone cannot hope to be the only tool available to support the development of school administrators, researchers and practitioners are beginning to recognize its potential. Active partnerships have initiated an examination of what makes for meaningful mentoring experiences in the field of school administration (pilot project: Alberta Teachers' Association and St. Albert Protestant Separate School District) and, most importantly they are turning to the stories and lived experiences of practicing principals and their assistants. This work is encouraging a view of mentorship that reflects the range of possibilities as well as a diversity of needs, values, developmental stages, resources, settings and time frames. Kram (1985) notes a common misconception: that mentoring relationships must and will look the same in all work settings. She asserts that, to be meaningful, the type of relationship that develops and the functions it fulfills will vary at each stage in one's career and should be dependent on individual differences and inclinations. This is sage advice given the experiences of Maureen, Steve, Tom and Sean:

Mentorship (men t?r ship) *n.* **5.** Reimagining the Possibilities

"Maybe it doesn't have to be just 2 people."

"It's really good having a peer colleague reflect with you."

"Each of us can give a little bit of a different perspective…she will give me a completely different twist and that will open new possibilities for both of us."

"I can see real value in having groups of principals, like 4 or 5, coming together to share experiences. I never thought of that but I can see real value in it."

"I just really feel we all have so much to learn."

"The more I imagine the more that seems possible and I feel a sense of relief and excitement in that."

An Intertwining Second Thread: Identity Formation

I know who I am as a teacher. I observed teachers engaged in their craft for twelve years in the public school system. I have been a university student for most of my adult life. I have watched my colleagues and been a teacher myself for 30 years. I know what it means to be a teacher; it is ingrained in my very being. I have often said, "I know teaching so well, you can blindfold me, take me anywhere in the world, drop me in a classroom and I will know what to do and how to do it!" My story of myself, my self-narration, is that of teacher. As with any story, the story I tell as an educator had a beginning, middle and it had an anticipated ending. In this way it demonstrated a certain degree of coherence and continuity. "But, who am I as an educational leader, especially one who is no longer positioned within the context of a school—that which I know so well?" "How have I come to make sense of myself now that I am removed from a world I knew and that knew me so well as a teacher?" Frequently I wonder how I, who dreamt of *nothing more than being a teacher, came to this place. At what moments did the transitions, within myself, from student to teacher, teacher to leader occur? How and when did my self-narration change? In so many ways this process feels ongoing and never quite complete.*

Kerby (1991) advises, "For much of our lives a concern with self-identity may be marginal at best. Questions of identity and self-understanding arise primarily in crisis situations and at certain turning points in our routine behavior" (p. 6). In my own case, as I moved from teacher, to counsellor, to school administrator, and finally system leader, I added new dimensions to my self-narration, listening carefully to how others storied me, telling and retelling my own story to make sense of my experiences and to maintain coherence and continuity in my "story to live by" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999, p. 4). As Reissman, (1993) suggests, "In telling about an experience, I am also creating a self—how I want to be known" by myself and by others (p. 11).

As I listened to and reflected on the stories of my participants I wondered how they had come to make sense of themselves as leaders and school principals and whether mentorship had played a role in that process?

The initial discussion of mentoring provided in Chapter 2 (p. 19) references a quote taken from the Alberta Teachers' Association monograph on this topic and clearly identifies the goal of mentorship as "the achievement of an identity transformation, a movement from the status of understudy to that of self-directing colleague" (p. 1). While it is used in its original context to refer to beginning teachers, the experiences of school administrators demonstrate a similar process at the leadership level (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Kram (1985) acknowledges the importance of identity formation and transformation within the work setting and highlights associated issues specific to age, gender and career stage. She argues that mentoring can facilitate this process and indicates that one of the psychosocial functions is to provide a forum for identity clarification. "…psychosocial functions affect the individual's relationship with self and with significant others both within and outside the organization" (p. 32).

The first thing I noticed when I became a principal is people look at you differently. Well, you're the boss right? You have all the answers. You have all the control and they look to you to have all the answers about everything and they never question your decisions--which kind of blew my mind. At first I was amazed at the difference. I was just appointed to the principalship and already people were looking at me differently and I was like, 'Wow!…just this appointment' This official title behind my name was a big deal. And I didn't really feel any different inside and that surprised me. I was still the same but I was amazed at the difference, the way people treated me differently. Now it's just the way it is and it's not that big a deal anymore.

I think I'm much more self-confident now. I wanted to be a principal for a long time and I was just ecstatic being appointed but since then I've just sort of accepted this is what I'm good at and I pretty much feel like I could do anything I wanted to now and it's taken me a long time to come to that…yeah, a long time to come to that.

Whether moving from the classroom or the assistant principalship to the role of principal, assuming the primary leadership responsibilities for the school is a transformative process that involves a change in self-perception and mind-set. In studying professional growth, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) observed that, as colleagues and peers came to view and respond differently to new administrators, they, themselves, began to assume a new role identity, no longer teacher but formal leader. Identifying leadership as both a state of mind as well as a state of being, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) comments on the tensions associated with "letting go of…teacher self-perceptions and adopting an administrative identity" (p. 495). In this way, the school principal finds him/herself moving from the comfort and confidence of teaching—an established and known role where the individual has typically reached a level of expertise and competence—to a position that is new and often fraught with uncertainty and discomfort. New administrators find themselves negotiating between 'institutional narratives' and their own familiar stories as teacher. This process of negotiation often results in multiple and unanticipated tensions as the individual seeks to locate him/her self within the multi-layered school and jurisdictional context (Applebaum & Du, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 1999).

Role-identity transformation may be a particularly difficult process for some school administrators and may occur at different times throughout a career as demands continue to grow and the expectations of school leadership change and evolve (Barth, 1990). Steve captures some of his own angst when, as an experienced principal, he says, **Those ontological questions that are out there weigh heavily on me.**

The potential for effective mentorship to support the growth and development of aspiring, novice and experienced practitioners is extensive and the need is timely and critical (Daresh, 2001; Crow and Matthews, 1998; Crocker, 2002). Not only can mentors serve as role models, guides, coaches, colleagues and friends but they can also provide a safe place for the "talk, social interaction and self-presentation…[self-narration] that helps to articulate the formation of identity" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 215).

Steve, Sean, Maureen and Tom all shared stories of personal change and the tensions they experienced as they came to understand that, once officially seated in the principal's chair, they no longer had automatic entry into the 'Teachers' Club." Their position on the educational landscape now lies somewhere between the classroom and the boardroom. Steve and Sean, in particular, spoke of negotiating between stories of practice as teachers and as principals—their own secret stories and cover stories—and the role they are expected to play in supporting the sacred stories of theory and policy. Steve refers to just such a dilemma as "working underground."

The stance one takes in relation to the norms and values of the organization requires due consideration and reflection on behalf of each individual. "Clarifying what it means to be [a leader] involves confronting the extent to which one will conform to organizational expectations and norms and the extent to which one will conflict with these expectations and norms" (Kram, 1985, p. 71). Mentors, who are often quite knowledgeable about a specific organization and/or particular job or undertaking, can assist with this process, helping the individual make sense of what to expect and what is expected. In this way, the mentor supports another in coming to an understanding of how he/she will define the role that has been assumed, determining the values held and the ways in which he/she wishes to behave. "To function effectively in a new role, a person must develop a way of viewing himself or herself in that role" (Fisher, 1986). The process of becoming a principal involves an intricate interplay of "learning and reflection that requires socialization into a new community of practice and assumption of a new role identity. The transition requires a careful balance of knowledge…and skills…guided by qualified professionals" (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 470).

I don't think I graduated thinking I wanted to be a principal…It just sort of happened.

Looping in a Third Thread: Trusting Relationships

I recollect an experience during my second year in the principalship. A parent had phoned with a concern regarding his son who had been involved in an altercation with another boy in his class. After investigating I discovered that both the students were equally responsible for the problem and I gave them each consequences for their actions. The boy's mother was furious with me and became very verbally abusive. After listening to her for quite a while I quietly indicated there was an appeal process but, if she continued to attack me, I would call the RCMP. Unfortunately she created quite a storm in the community and ended up keeping her son at home for more than a month. In the end he did come back and both the students had a great year and were able to develop a positive relationship. But, despite my efforts, I didn't really feel very good about how I had handled the situation.

Several months later, at a p.d. session for my area principals, one of the scenarios we were given clearly dealt with my experience. I can remember feeling it was a real breach of trust especially since several of my colleagues were aware of the situation. I still feel that way as I look back on it…

When we talk about mentorship I think I would have learned a great deal more about my own practice if my 'boss' had come to see me and said, "Let's talk about what happened and look at it together." When it was discussed amongst my colleagues I was so taken aback I wasn't really able to engage in the dialogue but I recollect that many of the suggestions were things I had tried. Somehow the way in which it was handled seemed so cut and dried with little consideration of me as a person trying to do a professional job. Relationships are very important to me and I think we need to develop trust if we really want to be able to take risks and learn from each other.

Sean, Tom, Steve and Maureen all emphasized trust as an essential component in those relationships that have supported their professional growth and nurtured their potential. For these individuals, trust has developed over time and as a result of shared experiences. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) identify a number of personal and relational qualities necessary for the establishment of trust between individuals including: openness, authenticity, competence, reliability and kindness. One of the benefits of working within a trusting relationship is that individuals are more inclined to take risks and experiment with unfamiliar and divergent ways of relating and experiencing their working world. High levels of trust encourage individuals to "disclose more accurate, relevant and complete data about problems. They will also be more willing to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 561). Orland-Barak (2002) observes that adult learning in particular is most effective when individuals can "share (their) experiences with other colleagues in conversational frameworks that are both challenging and supportive" (p. 452).

As educational leaders, we all shared stories of collaborative practice and a desire to enter into educative relationships with colleagues. However, we also spoke of personal and professional vulnerability and the desire to participate in relationships that were founded on trust, which offered unconditional positive regard and a place to be our 'true' selves and to reflect on our practice and experiment with new and/or different ways of being and knowing. Whether we described it as chemistry, likened it to falling in love, or thought of it as an educative and positive collaboration with a colleague(s), we all acknowledged the importance of relational trust within the mentoring process. **...when you have trust and you know the values are there and your norms match with theirs and all those kinds of things then you can "fall in love with that person." Everybody has their own definition of love; a loving relationship is a trustful one, a respect-full one...and I think, as you spend time together it's probably an equal one on both sides.**

OUR MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Maureen, Tom, Sean, Steve and Michele

It's an emotional attachment,

a connection

on the level of the heart

…a kind of trust or alliance

both people participate

something chemical

like falling in love…friends.

Back and forth,

we gain

from our differences

and,

spending time together,

the relationship evolves.

Why?

There are times

When you can't make it

on your own…

It's just fun to work with people,

Really!

Lifelong learning

is about

enriching my practices

and

my abilities—

learning from one another.

But, it takes time…

And Truth
And Authenticity
And Respect
And Trust
A sense of openness
Mutual understanding
A desire to be together

Time honored

Without an extended relationship

I will never get past the mechanical,

'This is how we do things'

and

I want…I need

more.

It's just having the time

blocked…

I find

I have all kinds of questions

I didn't realize were there…

Like empty spaces to fill

when I've got a problem…

can I ask…

do I trust?

Knowing there's someone there

for me,

who cares about me
wants me to be my best.

I feel connected,
confident,
cared for,

part of a whole
greater, enriched and enriching.

The Threads Begin to Come Together: Impacting Leadership Practice:

I would never be the kind of administrator I am today without him...and the risks he encouraged me to take.

As school jurisdictions and numerous other organizations turn to mentorship to help support the learning and growth of individuals who work with and for them, it becomes increasingly important for researchers and practitioners to join forces in examining the perceived impact and benefits mentoring can have on leadership practice. Bass (1990) advises that mentoring can successfully, "blend theory and practice, wisdom and experience" (p. 29) and, in doing so, support an integration of practice and university training. The result is an added sense of continuity and relevance in the preparation and professional development of school leaders.

As the role of leadership continues to evolve, to become increasingly demanding and complex, organizations and individuals alike recognize the need to respond. Mentorship, with its focus on helping "prospective, new and veteran administrators develop the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviors and values to be dynamic leaders" is viewed as one meaningful way in which to respond (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. viii). Put quite simply, schools work better when they have strong and effective leadership (Fullan, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005) and the educational and potentially collaborative and reciprocal nature of mentoring and co mentoring are intended to contribute positively in this regard.

In 2004 the Alberta Teachers' Association identified the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for effective school leadership (Leadership Quality Standard). This type of work assists us in recognizing the complexity and diversity of skills needed to become a successful school leader. Many writers and researchers have acknowledged the benefits of mentorship for beginning administrators (Daresh, 2001b; Mullen, 2004) especially in the area of skill acquisition as well as personal and professional development (Daresh, 2001, p. 78). Crow and Matthews (1998), among others (Mullen, 2005), stress the importance of mentorship for more experienced administrators as well. "...mid-career administrators need the assistance and companionship that mentors can provide. If school reform is to be realized, mid-career administrators must be convinced to change their practices and values" (p. x).

Maureen, Sean, Tom and Steve spoke of the many ways in which mentorship supported their growth as administrators and influenced their leadership skills.

> **[He's] a support with a practical ear...**
>
> **I think watching him make mistakes was the biggest learning for me...I reflect back...making those mistakes afforded me the opportunity of not making them.**

They also talked about gaining something deeper from their mentoring relationships. There is a sense that these important relationships contributed to the development of each individual's vision for leadership and the style that would come to represent their understanding of and work within the principalship.

> **My mentor used to talk about his beliefs and I think more about that now.**
>
> **I have chosen mentors to look up to for their passion and their vision.**
>
> **A lot of it is how 'so and so' did it combined with how I did it and you mesh the two...your practice becomes a hybrid.**
>
> **...it becomes visceral...I don't have to examine everything in my head...I just feel it.**

In reflecting on the full breadth of their careers each one of the participating principals discovered mentoring experiences that had impacted their present leadership practice. As Steve explained, you may not even realize the importance of a particular moment or interaction until, some time later, it suddenly and even surprisingly, has meaning for you.

Whether as a teacher consciously observing the practice of formal leaders:

I learned by observing, the good and the bad…

…or as an assistant principal working closely with the principal:

I believe I learned more from him in the first year as his assistant principal than I have learned from all my teachers in all of the time they taught me,

…or a new principal reaching out to other new colleagues:

You are by yourself, you're running solo generally, even if you have an assistant principal you're running solo. So you always want to phone someone who's been there and been in the trenches and say what would you do? You might not do the same thing that they suggest but you might get further insight into it and the scope of the problem especially in your first couple of years of administration,

…or a more experienced principal:

Brad was always my first call…I respected his openness and with Jackie, I respect her ethics and Glenn thinks out of the box…

I have a lot of experience but Mary's been involved in some neat things and I find that intriguing. Her experiences pave the road for the future—hearing of her experiences helps me down the road…

…Maureen, Steve, Sean and Tom's mentoring relationships have provided opportunities to learn and grow both personally and professionally; have impacted their leadership practice and their identities as leaders and how they view themselves as school principals.

Steve observed, **It's taken me thirty years to figure out that [administration is] a direction and not a destination. You'll never [completely] get there,** and throughout the journey he has learned that **…maybe we need to be using some of the collective wisdom.** Many principals echo this sentiment when they identify other school leaders as their primary source of help in becoming a school leader" (Crow & Matthews, 1998).

> **As you get older you realize you can't be that person…[but] I think the true mentors are there in spirit as well as in body…I don't forget them.**

Dear Tom, Steve, Maureen and Sean,

I come away from our work together with greater insights and a desire to implement what I have learned into aspects of my own practice. I now realize that, throughout this process I have had the opportunity to assume multiple roles—often the protégé, absorbing knowledge and gaining insight from my four participants; frequently a co-mentor bringing my own experiences and growing understanding to my work as a system leader; sometimes as a mentor providing guidance, insight and support to others who are newer to their careers. I have grown through the time we have spent together and as a result of the personal stories and experiences you have shared with me. I have come to reflect on how I position myself within these relationships, gaining greater sensitivity to aspects of power, the hierarchy within the educational system, diversity and experience.

Not only have I benefited from the opportunity to engage in personal and professional conversations with each of you but you have also provided me the occasion to reflect on aspects of my work as an educator and district administrator. You have also helped me come to a deeper understanding of the role mentoring can play in the lives of school principals. From this I now realize there is still a lot of important and necessary work to be done in connecting theory and practice. There are spaces where we have yet to fully establish meaningful connections between researchers and practitioners; pre-service and ongoing training programs with practical, experiential and guided learning.

I also see possibilities for expanding the learning generated by this research and utilizing it to help to guide and facilitate the development of mentoring opportunities at all levels of educational leadership.

As We Entered into a Relationship…

At the outset of our work together I did not anticipate nor realize that we would be engaged in a type of mentoring relationship but I have come to understand, with you and through you, that mentoring is multidimensional "reflecting a flexible, interactive process" and as such includes those "empowering interaction(s) among individuals who learn/research together for the purpose of personal and institutional change" (Mullen, 1999, p. 13).

Tom, you speak of all relationships residing within the framework of teaching and learning and you situate mentorship within that same frame. Through this research process I have been the learner, actively seeking the insights of my participants, reflecting on what I have learned and applying newly acquired understanding to my own practice. I hope that, through this study, we can also assume the role of teachers, provoking others to enter the discussion, opening the door to a collective inquiry that will enrich the possibilities for administrators to engage in a broad range of relationships that will serve to strengthen and enrich their practice as educational leaders. My beliefs about collaborative and mentoring relationships and the ways in which leaders can learn and grow interdependently continue to evolve. However, it is also my belief that we must encourage a definition of mentorship which embraces a broader understanding and advocate for structures that are responsive, inclusive and focused on shared teaching and learning.

You Helped to Expand My Understanding…

My experience with you has encouraged me to think of the fullness of mentorship; a continuum that embraces many possibilities; a mosaic of many faces. You have spoken of the informal and the intense type of relationship between two individuals who "click." There are also the informal networks you have established for advice and support or for professional (and sometimes personal) dialogue that give you hope and connection. There have been the relationships with one who is more experienced and greatly respected, whose expertise you value and seek out. There are also the more formal relationships which provide coaching or within which you see the potential to learn and grow as an administrator. Dyads, groups, formal or informal, one or many, long-term or changing— you speak of it all and I am reminded of Fullan and Hargreaves (2000) who challenge us to consider the "massive opportunity for innovation and renewal" (p. 54) which will face the educational system in the coming years and for which strong leadership will be required. They see the potential of mentorship to support the development of this type of leadership but insist that, to do so, it "must become less hierarchical, less individualistic, more wide-ranging, and more inclusive in its orientation…" (p. 54).

As I move beyond the research process and apply my learning to the work in which I am engaged within my district, I am witnessing a desire amongst other principals to enter into a collaborative teaching and learning process regardless of where they are in their careers or the levels of experience and expertise they have acquired. The intention of the relationships you have talked about has been to improve practice; to overcome feelings of isolation; to feed and nurture an endless thirst to learn; to be engaged in a dynamic collaborative process; and/or to share stories, challenges, questions and doubts. As I share your stories with others I am aware of a resonance that speaks to similar desires. I have come to believe it is time for researchers and institutional administrators alike to provide opportunities to explore mentorship for leaders and to embrace a new definition and understanding of mentorship, to acknowledge a multidimensional perspective (Mullen, 2005) and the associated need to invite practitioners into a process that encourages them to shape their own relationships in ways that meet the needs they have at any particular point in their career. Perhaps this is why, in more recent years, so many different yet related descriptors have been applied to the process of mentoring—coach, teacher, advisor, counselor, friend. A mentoring relationship can, at any time, provide any and all of these functions. And, as I am coming to understand, the relationship can expand outward and encircle any number of individuals. The strength and potential of the relationship rests within the dynamic between and among the professionals who seek to learn and grow from and through their shared collaboration. Mullen (1999) refers to this as creating a "culture of synergy."

I harken back to the words of Kealy and Mullen (1999) who advise that mentoring should not be thought of as a one-time occurrence but rather as an ongoing activity throughout the course of one's life with the goal being the "enable(ing), empower(ing) and self-actualiz(ing)" of the individual (p. 189). This understanding will shape my own practice as I seek to encourage, support and engage in mentoring relationships that are flexible enough to honor and reflect the needs of participants as each seeks to strengthen and enhance his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes.

I guess up until now I've thought of mentorship as me phoning one principal or me meeting with one principal. But maybe it's bigger than that, or different. You know, it could look different from that; it could be a group getting together and sharing common concerns, issues, topics and, yeah, stories.

Can I Make a Difference to and with Formalized Programs?

Throughout my study of mentorship I have opened my mind to the differing views on formal and informal mentoring. Could formalized programming ever hope to replicate that which is provided when one has advantage of a relationship that develops informally— when the chemistry between two or more individuals is just right and/or the level of trust facilitates openness and risk-taking? Darwin (2000) provided me with some initial insights on this question when he suggested that traditional stories of mentorship involving the magical meeting of the "right" person—a mentor—who helps one succeed professionally and personally do not often occur in "real life." He advises not everyone is fortunate enough to be standing in the right place at the right time to discover his or her mentor (p. 203). We are left to consider other possibilities and responsibilities.

Sean, as we reflected together on the potential of mentorship, you began to imagine that mentorship could be cultivated within a more formalized context. While you have a network of colleagues with whom you can discuss work related issues, you also speak of a desire to enter into a more formalized relationship, one in which there is the time and shared commitment to confronting some of the bigger issues with which you deal. I recollect the time when you and several teachers spent an afternoon in debate and conversation and how exhilarating and meaningful that felt for you and I think of the full mornings where you and I sat and talked about a wide range of issues. These were not stolen moments, hastily and guiltily snatched from the never-ending demands of our busy days, but planned and devoted to our work. You referred to them as professional development in its truest sense. Tom and Maureen, through the availability of a formalized coaching program within your school jurisdiction you seem to have found this type of opportunity to enrich your professional roles and engage in collegial relationships.

We must continue to make a space for the stories of school administrators and through them and with them to explore the potential of formalized programming. Daresh (2001) advises that jurisdictional support is important if mentoring programs are to flourish and I am learning that this support must advocate for a framework that honors and encourages flexibility and individuality. To assign a specific structure or to develop a "one size fits all" approach to mentorship would fail to address the individual, developmental and professional needs and desires of administrators and may fail to meaningfully challenge, support and strengthen leadership practice. I am drawn to the definition of Aubrey and Cohen (1995),

> I see the mentor in the richest sense as somebody who is dancing around the edges of a human being, extending his or her being and who at the same time has the wisdom to be a facilitator. The quality of that presence is "weightless"—that is, not loading the learner down with ideas of what to learn or when. It's not possible to engage in a real dialogue except to come in weightlessly, otherwise the mentor relationship is drawing the learner onto a path other than his own. The

> mentor has to be learning also, so the relationship is one of mutual buoyancy. The mentor should be open to whatever comes up in the learning process (p. 21),

and I imagine both/all those involved to assume a collective and shared responsibility for the relationship

Steve, I have valued your insights regarding the importance of shared experiences and am mindful that it takes time and mutual respect to facilitate and nurture the development of relationships in which there is a level of trust that supports and encourages openness and growth. Your experiences have helped inform my thinking regarding the need to honor the time required to craft and nurture something authentic that 'works.' You caution that something which is imposed can never hope to reside anywhere but alongside the "above ground" programming that has little to do with the real work of principals and teachers, that can never hope to touch their hearts or their souls. I am instantly reminded of the good counsel provided by Vinz (1997) who advises that guidelines (and I am extending this in my own thinking to include formalized programming) can (and perhaps should) provide the flexibility and opportunities to "unsettle each of us to examine our own 'becoming' and encourage us to learn more about how to…meet the profound challenge of finding [our own] 'unsung tunes and theories'" (p. 138) about education, leadership and ourselves as individuals, teachers and school leaders.

Sean, you have caused me to puzzle over the implications of time and how we negotiate time within the mentoring context. You talked about how difficult it is for principals to find the time to meet and work together on a regular basis and your feelings of guilt when you pick up the phone to call one of your colleagues, aware of the myriad demands placed on his time. Steve, you referred to the fast-paced environment in which we work and how it robs us of opportunities to be with our colleagues. Covey (1989) might suggest that the way we spend our time is a result of how we view our priorities and I have wondered about the implications for mentoring. Maureen and Tom, your experience has shown, when senior administration supported and facilitated collaborative work among colleagues and deemed it a priority, it legitimized the time necessary to come together and engage in professional conversations focused on leadership issues. As an educational leader I can invite others to enter into a collaborative process but can I impose such a condition on them or on those who do not wish to participate in the process? I believe there is a role for me to play in this debate and I know this aspect creates a space for my own continued conversations.

Mentor—Protégé—Co Mentor: A Challenge; A Commitment

At the outset of this dissertation, I referred to Janus (1996) who advised that the mentor is the "linchpin" of any mentoring relationship and therefore the ideal mentor should possess the expertise, commitment and time to provide assistance. I now offer a reframing of that view to include relationships where all participants see themselves within the continual ebb and flow of protégé and mentor—co-mentors— each sharing his/her own unique and varied expertise, learning and growing, with and through one another, investing the time to develop a relationship that reflects the needs of those involved and one which honors, nurtures and nourishes each individual. I return to your comment Steve, **So you make it alone so who the hell cares? Celebrating by yourself is not fun either so you have to realize that we're all sort of in it together** and I am personally challenged to respond to Fullan and Hargreaves (2000), by supporting mentorship as "a means to a larger end: that of creating a strong, improvement-oriented profession…a true learning profession" (p. 55).

Over the course of six months you have taken your time to talk with me and to share your stories and experiences. Your commitment to and interest in learning has extended beyond the walls of your own schools and your own lives to include me. You carved yet another space within the hectic pace of your personal and professional worlds to allow for one more contribution to education—this time my own. Knowing you now, I suspect you often do exactly this to assist and support others on their journey.

Steve, Maureen, Sean, and Tom you have been my learning companions for a relatively short period of time yet your influence will stay with me for many years. What I have come to understand with and through you will influence my practice as it has already influenced who I am as an educational leader, researcher, teacher and learner.

> **My dialogue with you is my dialogue with the cosmos, for you carry and incarnate those same energies. You oblige me to consider, to reflect, to grow, to enlarge my sense of the possible and thereby expand my embodiment of what the Self requires. We are asked from birth to death to become as fully as possible that which we are capable of becoming. Living is a dialectic with you, I am then living the symbolic life, which is to say, a life in depth. (Hollis, 1998, p. 59)**

With the deepest of respect and gratitude, I thank you for sharing some of your life experiences with me.

Michele

Postscript

I have come to realize that the final chapter of this dissertation may be the ending to this particular piece of writing but it is not the end of the conversation. Inherent in all narrative inquiry is an invitation to tell and retell the stories so that we may find "possibilities for reliving, for new directions and new ways of doing things" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Upon this re-reading I am struck by the desire for relationship that bubbles up from the stories included in this dissertation and I am aware, in my own story, of a similar desire. Steve captured this feelings when he talked about, "…a desire to be together…it's a desire to share a thought, to share a concept and work through that." My own desire for relationship is clearly evidenced in the story of my grandfather, my experience with Francis and the relational learning experiences I have enjoyed throughout my doctoral studies. I see it as well in Sean as he embraces relationships that include teachers, principal colleagues and senior administrators (as well as this researcher) and in Maureen, who describes herself as an independent and self-sufficient individual but who also talks about the bonding and sharing that occurred in her principals' group and the joy she finds in the relationship she shares with her present coach. This dawning realization of our shared desire to work in relationship with others, no matter our place on the educational landscape, provides me with new directions for my future work and personal reflection.

Thomas, (in Mullen & Lick, 1999) speaks of "The Lighthouse Keeper," one who, through her work, passion, commitment and leadership, supports others in discovering their "potential to function within an effective team…[accepting that t]he degree to which the team is effective is largely determined by the lead-mentor's willingness to develop vision, set far-reaching goals, successfully obtain resources, maintain a constructive climate, nurture planned change, and constantly check system processes" (p. 230). System leaders may be well advised to listen carefully to the stories and experiences of their school administrators. From them, they may be able to glean ways to nurture and extend support to these individuals who provide so much of the scaffolding for their schools. However, it is not without messiness and challenges that one assumes the role of "Lighthouse Keeper" but, as I have learned from Steve, the path to that which we consider 'ethically right and good to do' is not always straightforward and clear. I will take my counsel from Mullen who advises, "Without the reassurance of a 'lighthouse' positioned strategically along the route, the risk may be perceived as too daunting for the reward" (p. 230). I am learning, though, that the reward of mentorship and all that it can offer is well worth the associated risks.

References

Alberta Teachers' Association (1999). Mentorship program: A model project. *Research Monograph*, No. 39. Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2001). Teacher Survey. Alberta Teachers' Association, Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta Teachers' Association Council on School Administration (2002). School Administrator Survey. Alberta Teachers' Association, Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2004). Leadership Quality Standard. Alberta Teachers' Association, Edmonton, Alberta.

Allan, T., & Poteet, M. (1999). Developing effective mentoring relationships: Strategies from the mentor's point of view. *Career Development Quarterly*, 48. 59-73.

Alleman, E., Cochrane J., Doverspike J., & Newman, I. (1984). Enriching mentoring relationships. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *62*, 329-332.

Anderson, M. (1991). Principals: How to train, recruit, select, induct and evaluate leaders for America's schools. *ERIC Digest*

Applebaum, C., & Du, C. (1999). Learning to dance in administration: A two-step in professional development. In J. Clandinin & M. Connelly, (Eds.), *Shaping a professional Identity: Stories of educational practice* (p. 141-175). Danvers, MA: Teachers' College.

Argryis, C., & Schon, D. (1974). *Organization learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Aubrey, R., & Cohen, P. (1995). *Working wisdom: Timeless skills and vanguard strategies for learning organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bach, H. (2001). The place of the photograph in visual narrative research. *Afterimage*, *6*, 7-8.

Barth, R. (1990). *Improving schools from within*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Barth, R. (1997). The leader as learner. *Education Weekly*, *26*(23), 42-47.

Bass, G. (1990). The practitioners' role in preparing school administrators. *NAASP Bulletin, 74*(529), 27-30.

Bateson, M. C. (1994). *Peripheral visions: Learning along the way.* New York: HarperCollins.

Bateson, M. C. (1989). *Composing a life.* New York: Atlantic Monthly and Plume.

Battin, P. (1996). *Diversity and leadership: Mentoring builds leaders of the future.* Paper presented to the CAUSE annual conference, San Francisco.

Bennis, W., & Townsend, P. (1995). *Reinventing leadership.* New York: William Morrow and Company.

Bey, T., & Holmes, C. (1992). *Mentoring: contemporary principles and issues.* Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators

Birren, J. E., Kenyon, G. M., Ruth, J., Schroots, J., & Svensson, T. (Eds.). (1996). *Aging and Biography.* New York: Springer.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2000). The manager as politician. In *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 164-181). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bonda, M., Rinehart, J., & Volbrecht, R. (1995). Show me how to do like you: Co-mentoring as feminist pedagogy. *Feminist Teacher, 9,* 116-124.

Boosstram, R. (1994). Learning to pay attention. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 7*(1), 51-64.

Brown-Ferrigno, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Education Administration Quarterly, 39*(4), 468-503.

Bruner, J. (1985). Narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought. In *Learning and teaching: The ways of knowing (84th yearbook of the national society for the study of education)* (pp. 97-115). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Caravalho, A., & Maus, T. (1996). Mentoring: philosophy and practice. *Public Management, 78*(6), 17-23.

Carr, D. (1986). *Time, narrative, and history.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carson, T. R. (1986). Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 4*(2), 73-85.

Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher 22*(1), 5-12.

Chao, G.T., Waltz, P.M., & Gardner, P.D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology, 45*, 619-636.

Clandinin, D. J. (1994). *Revisioning teacher education through collaborative research: continuing the conversation.* Edmonton, Alberta: Among Teachers Community.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1986). Rhythms in teaching: study of teachers' personal-practical knowledge of the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 2* (4), 377-387.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1988). Studying teachers' knowledge of classrooms: Collaborative research, ethics, and the negotiation of narrative. *The Journal Of Educational Thought, 22* (2a), 269-282.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional landscapes.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry – Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Conle, C. (2000) Thesis as narrative or "what is the inquiry in narrative inquiry?" *The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Curricular Inquiry, 30* (02), 189-214.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners – narratives of experience.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher 19* (5), 2-14.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1991). Narrative and story in practice and research. In D.A. Schon (Ed.), *The reflective turn: Case studies in and on educational practice* (pp. 258-281). New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, E. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1992). *The teacher as curriculum maker.* In P.W. Jackson (Ed.), Handbook of research on curriculum: A Project of the American Educational Research Association (pp. 363-401). New York: MacMillan.

Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change*. New York: Fireside.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design – qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crocker, C., & Harris, S. (2002). Facilitating the growth of administrative practioners as mentors. *Journal of Research for Educational Leadership, 1*(2), 5-20

Crow, G., & Matthews, L.J. (1998). *Finding one's way: How mentoring can lead to dynamic leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (1995). Research base on mentoring for educational leaders: What do we know? *Journal of Educational Leadership, 33*(5), 7-16.

Daresh, J. C. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (2001b). *Beginning the principalship*, 2nd. Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C. (2002). *What it means to be a principal: Your guide to leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Darling, L. A. (1986). The mentoring mosaic: A new theory of mentoring. In W. A. Gray & M. M. Gray (Eds.), *Mentoring: Aid to excellence in career development, business and the profession* (pp. 1-7). Burnaby, British Columbia: International Association for Mentoring.

Daresh, J., & Playko, M. (1990). *Leaders helping leaders: A practical guide to administrative mentoring*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Darwin, A. (2000). Critical reflections of mentoring in work settings. *Adult Education Quarterly, 50*(3), 197-212.

Davis, O.J. (2001). A view of authentic mentorship. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 17*(1), 1-4.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994*). Handbook of qualitative education*, Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Balch.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier Books.

Diaz, C., (2002). Conversational heuristic as a reflexive method for feminist research. *International Review of Sociology, 12*(2), 249-254.

Dingman, S. (2002). Mentoring connections: Learning relationships. *Creative Nursing, 8*(3). 26-32.

Dodgson, J. (1992). Do women in education need mentors? *Education Canada, Spring,* 29-33

Doll, M. A. (1995). *To the lighthouse and back.* New York: Collier Books.

Dreyfus, H., & Dreyfus, S. (1986). *Mind over the machine.* New York: The Free Press.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities: Best practices for enhancing student achievement.* Indiana, U.S.A: National Education Service.

Eaker, R., DuFour, R., & Burnette, R. (2002). *Getting started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities.* Indiana, U.S.A: National Educational Service.

Eby, L. (1997). Alternative forms of mentoring in changing organizational environments: A conceptual extension of the mentoring literature. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 51,* 125-144.

Egan, K., & Nadaner, D. (1988) *Imagination and education.* New York: Teachers' College, Columbus University.

Eisley, L. (1975). *All the strange hours: The excavation of a life.* New York: Charles Scribner's Son.

Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice.* New York: MacMillan.

Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (1997). Narrative research: Political issues and implications. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(1), 75-83

Ellis, J. L. (1998). Introduction: The teacher as interpretive inquirer. In J. L. Ellis (Ed.). *Teaching from understanding.* New York: Garland.

Ellis, J. L., Small-McGinley, J. & De Fabrizio, L. (2001). *Caring for kids in the community.* New York: Peter Lang Pub.

Erickson, E.H. (1950). *Childhood and society.* New York: Norton.

Feldman, A. (1999). The role of conversation in collaborative action research. *Educational action research, 7*(1), 125-144.

Ferriero, D. S. (1982). ARL Directors as Protégés and Mentors. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *7*(6), 358-365.

Fisher, B. (1994). *Mentoring*. London: Library Association Publishing.

Freeman, M. (1993). *Rewriting the self: History, memory and narrative*. New York: Routledge.

Fullan, M. (1992). *Successful school improvement – the implementation perspective and beyond.* Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2004). *Personal growth guide*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mentoring in the new millennium. *Theory into Practice, 39*(1), 50-56.

Gadamer (1976). *Philosophical hermeneutics*. London: University of California Press.

Gardiner, M., Enomoto, E., & Grogan, M. (2000). *Coloring outside the lines*. State University of New York Press.

Gardner, H. (1991). *The Unschooled mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Gehrke, N. (1988). Toward a definition of mentoring. *Theory Into Practice*, *27*(3). 190-194.

Goldsmith, M., Lyons, L., & Freas, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Coaching for leadership: How the world's greatest coaches help leaders learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Goodson, I. (1995). The story so far: Personal knowledge and the political. In J.A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative*. London: Falmer Press.

Goodson, I., & Hargreaves, A. (1996). *Teachers' professional lives*. London: Falmer.

Gordon, S., & Maxey, S. (2000). *How to help beginning teachers succeed*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (p. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gunn, E. (1995). Mentoring: The democratic version. *Training*, *32*(8), 64-67.

Halford, J. M. (1998). Easing the way for new teachers. *Educational Leadership, 55*(5), 33-37.

Haney, A. (1997). *The role of mentoring in the workplace*. In M.C. Taylor (Ed), Workplace Education. Toronto, Ontario: Culture Concepts. 211-228

Hardcastle, B. (1988). Spiritual connections: protégés' reflections on significant mentorships. *Theory into Practice*, 27(3). 201-208.

Hart, A. (1993). *Principal succession: Establishing leadership in the schools*. Albany State, University of New York Press.

Healy, C. & Welchert, A. (1990). Mentoring relations: A definition to advance research and practice. *Educational Researcher, 19*(9), 17-21.

Higgins, M. (2000). The more the merrier: Multiple developmental relationships and work satisfaction. *Journal of Management Development, 19*(3/4), 277-296

Higgins, M., & Thomas, D. (2001). Constellations and careers: Toward understanding the effects of multiple developmental relationships. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 22*, 223-247.

Hoerr, T. (2005). Meeting new teachers' personal needs. *Educational Leadership, 62*(8), 82-84.

Hollingsworth (1994*). Teacher research and urban literacy education*. Teacher. New York: College Press

Holly (1989). *Writing to grow: keeping a personal-professional journal.* Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann

Homer. (1963). *The odyssey*. (R. Fitzgerald, Trans.). New York: Anchor Doubleday. (Original Work Published).

hook, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Huang, C. & Lynch, J. (1995). *Mentoring*. New York: HarperCollins.

Hughes, T. (1988). Myth and education. In K. Egan & D. Nadaner (Eds.), *Imagination and education* (pp. 30-44). New York: Teachers College Press.

Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research, 61*, 505-532.

Janas M. (1996). Mentoring the mentor: A challenge for staff. *Journal of Staff Development*. *17*(4), 2-5.

Jipson, J., & Paley, N. (2000). Because no one gets there alone: Collaboration as co-mentoring. *Theory into Practice, 39*(1), 36-42.

Josselsin, R., & Lieblich, A. (Eds.). (1993). *The narrative study of lives*. Newbury Park CA: Sage.

Jossi, F. (1997). Mentoring in times of change. *Training and Development, 51*(8), 50-54.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1988). *Student achievement through staff development*. New York: Loingman.

Kay, R. S. (1990). A definition of developmental self reliance. In T.M. Bey & C.T. Holmes (Eds), *Mentoring: Developing successful new teachers*. Reston, VA: Association of Teacher Educators. 25-37.

Kaye, B., & Jacobson, C. (1996). Reframing mentoring. *Training and Development, 51*(8), 44-47

Kealy, W., & Mullen, C.A. (1999). *Rethinking mentoring relationships*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Kenyon, G. M. (1996). Meaning/value of personal storytelling. In J. Birren, G. Kenyon, G. E. Ruth, J. Schroots & T. Svensson (Eds.), *Aging and biography: Explorations in adult development* (pp. 39-60). New York: Springer.

Kerby, A., P. (1991). *Narrative and the self.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

King, T. (2003). *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Inc.

Kochen, F., & Trimble, S. (2000). From mentoring to co-mentoring: Establishing collaborative relationships. *Theory into Practice*, Winter. 20-29.

Kotre, J. (1999/2000). Generativity and the gift of meaning. *Generations, 23*(4), 65-71.

Kram, K.E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life.* Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.

Lambert, L. et al. (1995). *The constructivist leader*. London: Teachers College Press.

Levinson, D. J., Darrow, C. N., Klein, E. B., Levinson, M. H., & McKee, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R. & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research – Readings, analysis, and interpretation.* New York: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. CA: Sage.

Lyons , L. S. (2000). Coaching at the heart of strategy. In M. Goldsmith, L. Lyons, & A. Freas (Eds.), *Coaching for leadership: How the world's greatest coaches help leaders learn* (pp. 3-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Mader , W. (1996). Emotionality and continuity in biographical contexts. In J. Birren, G. Kenyon, J. E. Ruth, J. Schroots & T. Svensson (Eds.), *Aging and biography: explorations in adult development* (pp. 39-60). New York: Springer.

Malone, R. (2001). Principal mentoring. *ERIC Digest* ED457535.

McAdams, D. P. (1996). Narrating the self in adulthood. In J. E. Birren; G.M. Kenyon; J. Ruth; J. F. Schroots & T. Svensson (Eds.), *Aging and biography* (pp. 131-148). New York: Springer Publishing.

McAdams, D. & de St. Aubin, E. (1998). Stories of commitment: The psychosocial construction of generative lives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*. 678-694.

McCormack (2004). Storying stories: A narrative approach to in-depth interview conversations. *International Journal of Sociological Research Methodology*, 7(3), 219-236.

Megginson, D., & Clutterbuck, D. (1995). *Mentoring in action*. London: Kogan Page.

Mentoring Institute. (1997). *The new mentoring paradigm*. Sidney, British Columbia: The Mentoring Institute

Miller, J. (1990). *Creating spaces and finding voices: Teachers collaborating for empowerment*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Missirian, A. (1982). *The corporate connection. Why executive women need mentors to reach the top.* N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Mitchell, W. J. T. (Ed) (1981). *On narrative.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Moore, K., & Salimbene, A. (1981). The dynamics of the mentor-protégé relationship in developing women as academic leaders. *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership, 2*, 51-64.

Morrison, E. (2005). Trial by fire. *Educational Leadership, 62*(8), 66-68.

Morse, J. M., & Field, P. A. (1995). *Qualitative research methods for health professionals* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mulholland, J., & Wallace, J. (2003). Strength, sharing and service: Restorying and the legitimation of research texts. *British Education Research Journal, 29*(1), 5-23.

Mullen, C. (2004). *Climbing the Himalayas of school leadership*. Maryland: Rowand and Littlefield.

Mullen, C. (2005a). *Fire and ice: Igniting and channeling passion in new qualitative researchers*. New York: Peter Lang.

Mullen, C. (2005b). *Mentorship primer*. New York: Peter Lang.

Mullen, C., & Lick, D.W. (Eds.) (1999). *New directions in mentoring: Creating a culture of synergy*. London: Falmer Press.

Mullen, C., Cox, M. C., Boettcher, C. K., & Adoue, D. S. (Eds.). (1997;2000). *Breaking the cycle of one: Redefining mentorship in the lives and writings of educators*. New York: Peter Lang.

Murray, M. (1991). *Beyond the myths and magic of mentoring: How to facilitate an effective mentoring program*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education.* Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Orland-Barak, L. (2002). What's in a case: What mentors' cases reveal about the practice of mentoring. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 34*(4), 451-468.

Owens, B., Herrick, C., & Kelley, J. (1998). A prearranged mentorship program: can it work long distance? *Professional Nurse, 14*, 78-84.

Oxford English Dictionary, Online (2003).

Pinar, W. (1988). Whole, bright, deep with understanding. Issues in qualitative research and autobiographical method. In W. Pinar (Ed.) *Contemporary Curriculum Discourses.* Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Poldre, P. (1994). Mentoring Programs: A Question of Design. *Interchange, 25*(2), 183-193.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Ragins, B., & Cotton, J. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes. *Journal of Organization Behavior*, 20, 493-509.

Ragins, B., Cotton, J., & Miller J. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal, 43*(6), 1177-1194.

Ragins, B., & Scandura, T. (1999). Burden or blessing? Expected costs and benefits of being a mentor. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 20,* 169-174.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis – qualitative research methods (v 30).* New York: Sage Publications, Inc.

Roberts, A. (2000). Mentoring revisited: A phenomenological reading of the literature. *Mentoring and Tutoring, 8*(2), 145-168.

Rogers, C. (1980). *A way of being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rossman, G., & Rallis, S. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sandelowski, M. (1986). The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science, 8,* 27-37.

Sandler, B. R. (1995). Women as mentors: Myths and commandments. *Educational Horizons, 7*(2), 1205-107.

Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schon, D. (1991). *The reflective turn: Case studies on educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Secretan, L. (1997). *Reclaiming higher ground*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1987). *The principalship – A reflective practice perspective.* Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1999). *Educational governance and administration*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2000). *The lifeworld of leadership*: Creating culture, community and personal meaning in our schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Silko, L. (1996). *Yellow women and a beauty of the spirit*. New York: Touchstone.

Smith, D. G. (1994). Brighter than a thousand suns: facing Pedagogy in the nuclear shadow. In D. G. Smith, *Pedagon: Meditations on pedagogy and culture*. Bragg Creek, Alberta: Makyo Press.

Smith, J. (1989). *Experiential learning in educational administration*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. Alabama.

Steinberg, A. G., & Foley, D. M. (1999). Mentoring in the army: From buzzword to practice. *Military Psychology, 11*(4), 365-379.

Sullivan, C. (1992). cited in Janas (1996). Mentoring the mentor: A challenge for staff development. *Journal of Staff Development*. *17*(4), 56-68.

Sullivan, C. (2004). *How to mentor in the midst of change*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Thomas, D. A., & Higgins, M. C. (1996). Mentoring and the boundaryless career: Lessons from the minority experience. In M. B. Arthur & D. M. Rousseau (Eds.), *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era* (pp. 268-281). New York: Oxford University Press

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(4), 547-570.

Vance, C. (2000). Discovering the riches in mentor connections – reflections. *Nursing Leadership*, 3rd Quarter. 24-25.

Vinz, R. (1997). Capturing a moving form: 'Becoming" as teachers. *English Education, 29*(2), 137-146.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Thought and language*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Weller, L. D., & Weller, S. J. (2002). *The assistant principal: Essentials for effective school leadership*. Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press.

Whitehead, J. (1995). Review essay: Mentoring. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 16(1)*, 59-72.

Wills, C. & Kaiser L. (2002). Navigating the course of scholarly productivity: The protégé's role in mentoring. *Nursing Outlook*, *50*(2), 61-66.

Wilmore, E. L. (2002). *Principal Leadership: Applying the new educational leadership constituent council standards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Witherall, C., & Nodding, N. (Eds.). (1991). *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education*. New York: Teachers' College.

Witherspoon, R (2000). Starting smart: Clarifying coaching goals and roles. In M. Goldsmith, L. Lyons, & A. Freas (Eds.), *Coaching for leadership: How the world's greatest coaches help leaders learn* (pp. 3-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Wright C.A., & Wright, S.D. (1987). Young professionals. *Family Relations 36*(2), 204-208.

Zachery, L. (2000). *The mentor's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zembylas, M. (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: a poststructural perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, *9*(3), 213-238.

APPENDIX A

Participant Letter

To: School Principals (Date)
_____________School Division

I am a teacher and Associate Superintendent presently working towards a doctoral degree at the University of Alberta. I am conducting a research study with the purpose of understanding principals' experiences of mentorship and how these experiences may have influenced their leadership practice.
To this end, I would value your participation in my study.

The study will be conducted as a narrative inquiry, focusing on sharing stories and experiences. Your involvement in the study would include an initial, taped interview to be arranged at your convenience, when we would talk about your professional and personal history. As well, I would appreciate additional opportunities to meet with you, at your convenience, to discuss and explore your experiences with regards to the mentoring relationship(s) you have experienced. The amount of time I would spend with you would be flexible and negotiable, depending on your needs, obligations and commitments. I would anticipate 4-6 audio- taped interview sessions, of approximately one hour in duration, during a six-month period, January-June 2004. Transcriptions of our conversations will be made available to you and you will have the right to request removal of any parts of your stories that you would feel uncomfortable sharing publicly. I will use the transcriptions of our shared conversations and my own field notes to guide my writing of your experiences and this written description will be provided for you to review and decide if it accurately represents your experiences in the mentoring relationship. You may change or delete any information you wish.

Participation in the study is free and voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. All data collected during the study will be secured and confidential, then destroyed upon completion of the study. Your anonymity is assured, pseudonyms will be used, timeframes will be blurred and you will not be identified in any document resulting from the research. The research will be conducted as approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board, and in a manner that is respectful of your teaching and leadership practices and needs.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta and the information will only be used for educational purposes such as thesis preparation, educational papers and presentations. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

I hope that you will participate in this study. There are no known risks associated with participation, and while research benefits cannot be guaranteed, I expect that you will find the experience to be affirming of your professional practice and the mentoring relationship you have experienced/are experiencing. In addition, I anticipate that the research findings will increase educational stakeholders understandings with regards to mentorship and leadership practice.

Should you have any questions, or desire further information, please feel free to contact me , or my supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk at Nancy.Melnychuk@ualberta.ca.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. I look forward to meeting with you, should you decide to participate.

Sincerely,

Michele Dick

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: **Principals' Experiences of Mentoring**

I, ____, agree to participate in the above noted research study being conducted by Michele Dick, doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I have been informed as to the intention of this study and the methodology being used for data collection. Furthermore, I am aware that my participation in this study is free and voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice, harm or loss of benefit.

Participant:

____________________	____________________	____________________
(print name)	**(signature)**	**(date)**

Researcher:

____________________	____________________	____________________
(print name)	**(signature)**	**(date)**